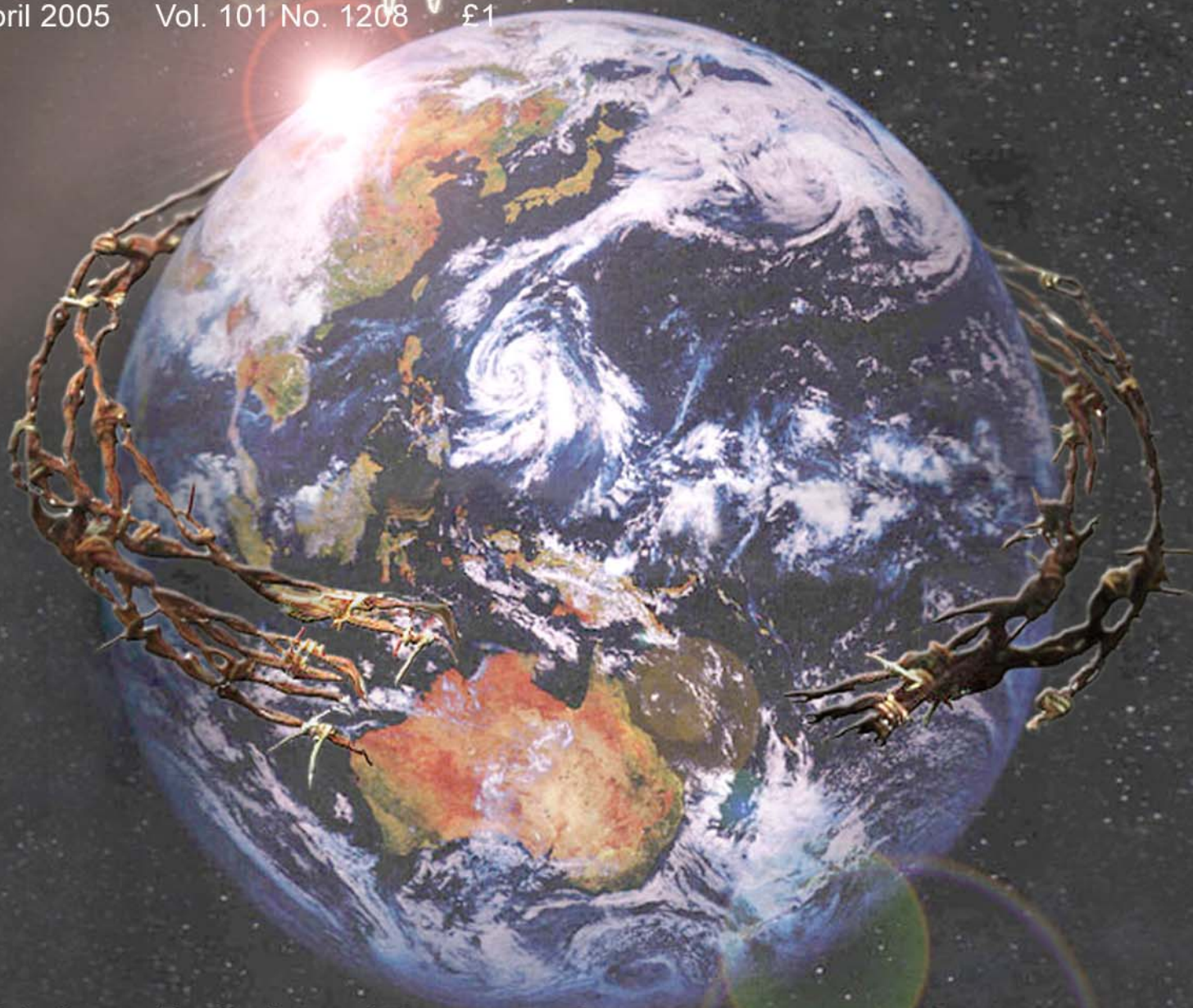


Socialist Standard

What is Common
Ownership?
What Socialism means
Organising Without Money
Rise and Fall of the NHS
Profit Motive: a Case Study

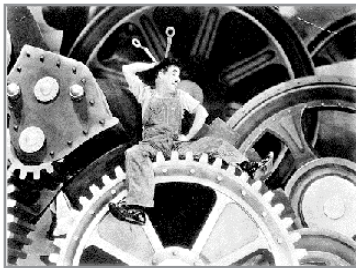
April 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1208 £1



World in Bonds or World in Common?

The case for Common Ownership

Journal of the Socialist Party—Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



Mine, All Mine... Owning the means of production: Page 8



A fistful of popular culture: page 11



Just say arrgh... page 12

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“If the unthinkable happened sadists might find pleasure in the downfall of a politician as plausible, dishonest and obsessive as Blair. But what then? ”

Greasy Pole, page 19

Politics today is a game of Ins and Outs in which gangs of professional politicians compete with each other to attract votes, the gang securing a majority of seats in parliament assuming responsibility for running the political side of the profit system.

To win votes they have to promise - and be believed - to improve things both for the population in general, as by managing the economy so as to avoid slumps and crises, and for particular groups within the population.

When the economy is expanding or even just ticking over the Ins have the advantage. They can claim that this is due to their wise statesmanship and prudent management. Such claims are false as the economy goes its own way - expanding or contracting as the prospect of profits rises or falls - irrespective of which gang of politicians is in office. But making such claims can backfire as, when the economy falters, the Outs can blame this on the incompetence and mismanagement of the Ins. But that's not true either since politicians don't control the way the economy works.

The Labour politicians who took over from the Tories as the Ins in 1997 have been lucky in this respect. In the past, Labour periods in office had happened to coincide with the downturn phase of the economic cycle, but the last election in 2001 and the coming election this year have happened to coincide with the economy ticking over. So, instead of having to live up to their previous reputation of being the party of austerity, they have been in the position of being able to offer a few crumbs to voters.

But throwing crumbs to the people (or to carefully targeted sections of the people whose votes could swing things) is not the

main purpose of government. Marx once wrote that the government is "but a committee for managing the common



The Game

affairs of the whole bourgeoisie". And it's still true. The function of any government is to manage the common affairs of the capitalist class as a whole. This involves a number of things. Sustaining a context in which profit-making can continue. Spending the money raised from taxes (that are ultimately a burden on the capitalist class) in a prudent way on things that will benefit the capitalist class as a whole, such as providing them with an educated, relatively healthy and so productive workforce. Maintaining - and if need be using - armed forces to protect sources of raw materials, trade routes, investment outlets and markets abroad. That's what most government spending goes on, and balancing this against income from taxes is what budgets are essentially about.

It is only because wage and salary workers, active or retired, have the vote

that, occasionally if there's a small margin of money spare, a few crumbs are offered to some section or other of the electorate.

No doubt, the pensioners, the home buyers and the families offered a few hundred extra pounds a year will accept these crumbs cast before them by Gordon Brown in his pre-election budget. Hopefully, they won't accept them as bribes to vote for his particular gang of politicians, but simply because it would be stupid not to.

Nowadays most people have learned by experience and are rightly just as cynical about the politicians and their promises - and crumbs - as are politicians about how they get people to vote for them. But cynicism is not enough. This should be turned into rejection. The game of Ins and Outs, to decide which gang of professional politicians should manage the common affairs of the capitalist class, only continues because most of us agree to take part in it. But by voting for them we in effect give them the power to keep the capitalist system going. And that, not which particular gang of politicians happens to be in office, is the cause of today's problems since built-in to capitalism is putting making profits before satisfying people's needs.

Socialists are only too well aware that most people put up with capitalism, and go along with its political game of Ins and Outs in the hope of getting a few crumbs out of it, because they see no practicable alternative. But there is an alternative, as we explain in the articles in this issue. Politics should be more than individuals deciding which politicians to trust to deliver some crumbs that they think will benefit them individually. It should be about collective action to change society. About taking over the whole bakery.

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What would socialist society do about nuclear energy?

The need for a radically new energy technology is not just pressing. As India, Asia and China rapidly industrialise, it's becoming a crunch issue. If China were to burn coal at the current U.S. level of two tons per person, the country would use 2.8 billion tons per year--more than current world production of 2.5 billion tons.

And if the Chinese use oil at the same rate as Americans now do, by 2031 China would need 99 million barrels of oil a day. The world currently produces 79 million barrels per day and may never produce much more than that (*Yahoo News*, March 9)

Nuclear fission is firmly back on the agenda, with Labour and Tory hedging on the subject and only the unelectable Lib-Dems against. But the waste problem is unsolved and waste free nuclear (hot) fusion is still decades and hundreds of billions of dollars away. If only there was another way.



Eyes on the prize: Rusi Taleyarkhan claims to have performed bubble fusion. Critics say it's just hot air.

For scientists, it was like the moment Sir Perceval murmurs the fateful words in King Arthur's ear: "Sire, I have seen it. The Grail. I had it in my very hands." When the world's first successful cold fusion experiment was announced in 1989 the scientific establishment dropped its collective clipboard, rubbed its horn-rimmed glasses and gasped. It couldn't

be. Cold fusion, at last! Indeed it couldn't, and alas, it wasn't. Like Sir Perceval, the team at Oak Ridge in Tennessee found it and lost it again. Nobody could reproduce the experiment.

Cold fusion - the ability to convert matter into energy the same way the sun does it, but without the temperatures - is so fantastic an idea that everybody wants it to be true. A single match will light a cigarette, but the mass of that match, if converted according to Einstein's equation 'Energy = Mass times the speed of light', would light London for months. Forget Nobel prizes, the scientist who delivers success at this will be famous forever for abolishing the world's energy problems - forever.

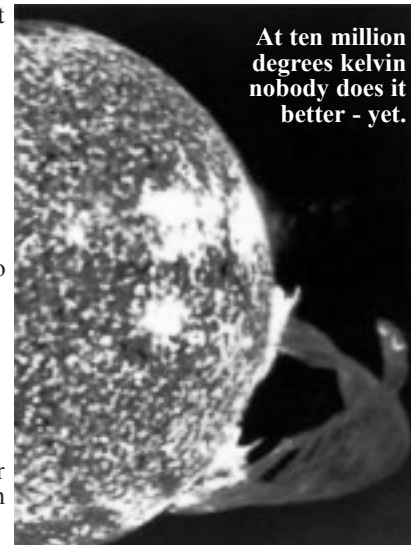
The idea of fusing heavy hydrogen nuclei at temperatures less than 10 million degrees Kelvin goes against every scientific principle. Cold fusion was off the agenda. And then, incredibly, with a new technique called sonoluminescence, it seemed possible again. By focusing sound waves into bubbles in acetone, experimenters, again at Oak Ridge, found bubbles forming with fantastic levels of heat, up to 10,000 Kelvin. The process has been called the 'star in a jar'.

But was it fusion? BBC *Horizon* decided to recreate the experiment into bubble fusion (Feb 17) and got a negative result. Improved timings showed no generation of neutrons, one sure sign of fusion. Another problem was that 10,000 K

is orders of magnitude too low for fusion. But the controversy rages on. The sun's surface is only 7,000K because all the real heat is indoors, and new measurements suggest it may be the same with bubble fusion, with new bubbles in sulphuric acid being the hottest ever recorded (*New Scientist*, March 5).

What's interesting is that infinite energy would be as uncomfortable to capitalist markets as it is to scientific orthodoxy. It could never be allowed to get out. If bubble fusion ever becomes proved, we can absolutely rely on one thing - our electricity bills won't go down. New technology tends to deliver wealth upwards, to the rich who own and control it,

not downwards to the rest of us. An orgy of free energy would still have to wait for socialist society to be realized.



At ten million degrees kelvin nobody does it better - yet.

Will there be religion in socialist society?

Opinions are divided. Religious people obviously

think there will be religion no matter what economic arrangements exist. Socialists tend to regard religion as the mind's desperate attempt to invent unfalsifiable explanations for a disordered and insane reality, and they also point to religion's long history of being used by ruling elites to control ignorant and fearful populations.

History indicates that the more a society knows about the world through science the less religious it becomes. In Britain today hundreds of parishes have fewer than ten in the congregation, many churches have closed down (some of them to become pubs, encouragingly) while others are closed through the winter or used as derelict hang-outs for drug addicts and prostitutes (*BBC1 News*, Jan 19). The raging controversy over allowing homosexuality in the Anglican church is partly informed by the sheer difficulty of getting any priests at all. The average age of a priest is 68, and in ten years half of them will be dead. In France there are so few ordinations that priests are being imported from Senegal and Burkina

Faso to mind parishes with 40 churches but congregations of five. These African priests blame western security and comfort (!), since back home they can get 5000 to a Sunday sermon (*BBC Radio 4*, Jan 6).

The question is also open from a scientific perspective. Evolutionary

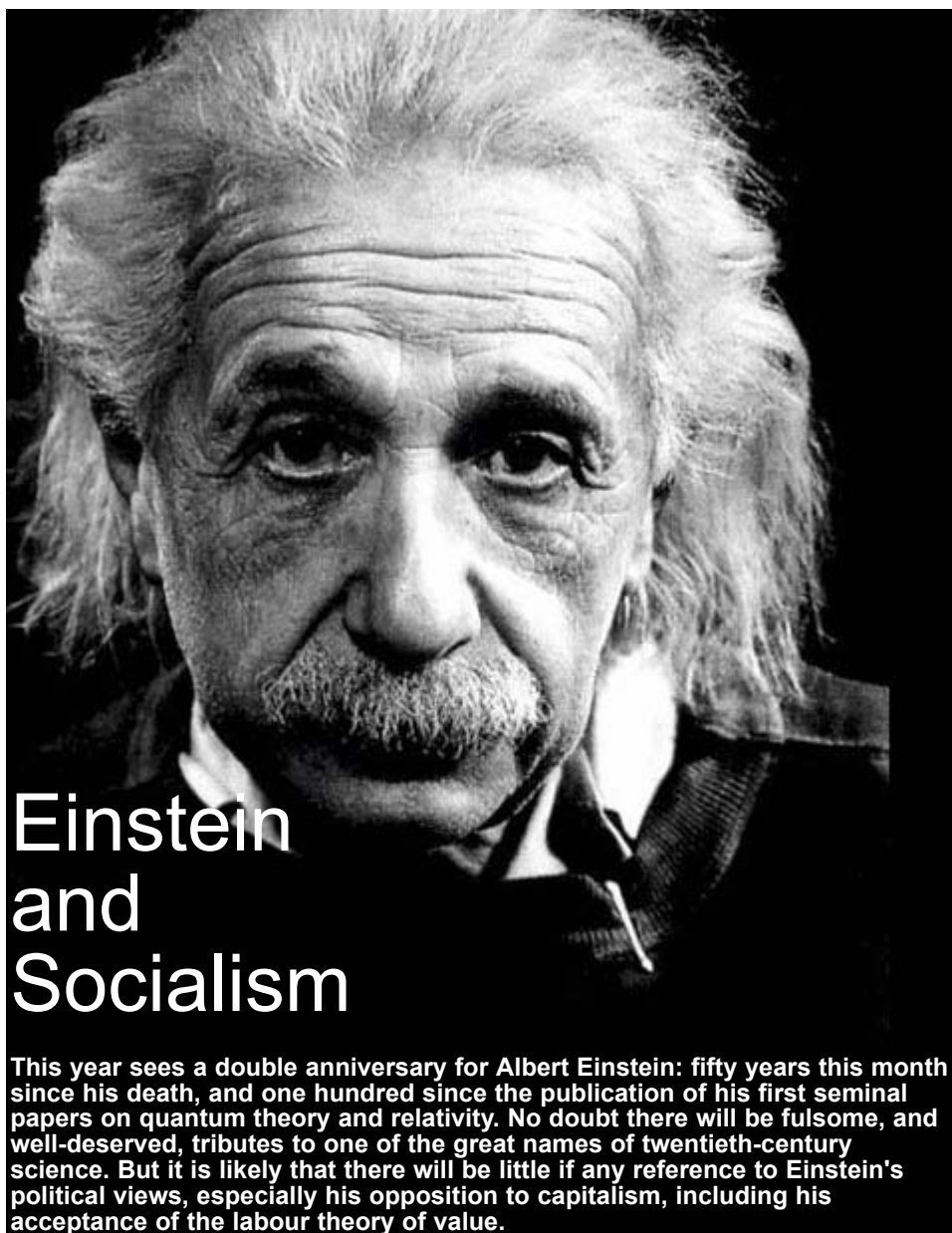
Shrinking congregations: the Pope tries to spot a Catholic.



biologists have taken up E.O. Wilson's idea that religion has an evolutionary advantage, and gone looking for the genetic evidence. The geneticist Dean Hamer in 'The God Gene' even claims to have found the holy gene itself, VMAT2 (*New York Times*, Feb 19) while

the neuropsychologist Michael Persinger claimed to be able to produce religious states in people by stimulating their temporal lobes with magnets (*Economist*, Dec 16, 04), although later research using double-blind techniques has refuted this claim. Evidence supposedly citing identical twins' similar levels of spirituality are scarcely conclusive since 'spirituality', if it exists, can not be measured.

Socialist society is likely to be full of parties, celebrations and seasonal rituals, because they're fun and because we all like to find meaning in life, but there's no scientific evidence that socialists are ever likely to be more cosmic than sun-worshippers in a beach paradise.



Einstein and Socialism

This year sees a double anniversary for Albert Einstein: fifty years this month since his death, and one hundred since the publication of his first seminal papers on quantum theory and relativity. No doubt there will be fulsome, and well-deserved, tributes to one of the great names of twentieth-century science. But it is likely that there will be little if any reference to Einstein's political views, especially his opposition to capitalism, including his acceptance of the labour theory of value.

In 1949, Einstein published an article 'Why Socialism?' in the first issue of the American left-wing journal *Monthly Review*. It is available on the web at various places, e.g. <http://www.monthlyreview.org/598Einst.htm>. In it he argued that class society is an instance of 'the predatory phase' of human development (in Thorstein Veblen's phrase). Yet humans depend on society to provide food, clothing, a home and so on. We have a fixed and unalterable biological constitution, but during our lives we acquire a 'cultural constitution' which is subject to change. Anthropological research shows that people's social behaviour differs greatly, so our biological make-up does not determine the way we live.

But small groups of humans cannot be self-sufficient: 'mankind constitutes even now a planetary community of production and consumption.' This dependence on society, however, is seen as a threat to our existence rather than as a positive asset. This is largely due to 'the economic anarchy of capitalist society'. All those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production, Einstein calls workers. Workers' wages are determined not by the value of what they produce but by their minimum

needs. As private capital becomes more and more concentrated, it achieves a power that even democratic politics cannot check.

Under capitalism, he continues, production is for profit, not use. Unemployment exists almost always, and workers are in fear of losing their jobs. Unlimited competition results in an enormous waste of labour. The worst evil of capitalism, he says, is the 'crippling of individuals', as education inculcates competitive notions.

Having given a pretty decent sketch of how capitalism works and of what's wrong with it, Einstein goes on to advocate a planned economy which guarantees a livelihood to everyone and adjusts production to the needs of the community. But a planned economy, he recognises, is not socialism, as it may involve 'the complete enslavement of the individual' (so perhaps he had Russian-style state capitalism in mind?). And after a few misguided remarks about so-called problems of socialism (how to limit the power of the bureaucracy? etc), Einstein closes his contribution. It's a shame that he is so inconclusive, but his article is still well worth reading, even if you can't get through it at the speed of light.

PB

Red Snapper

Sound bites and unsound nibbles

I don't think we should be battering this subject to death."
Martin McGuinness to John Humphries, on IRA members who murdered Robert McCartney by, er, battering him to death. BBC R4, March 9, 8.00am.

It will be scrapped. I am determined to ensure that the rights of those who play by the rules are respected."
Michael Howard on the Human Rights Act, The Guardian, March 19.

People who have been arrested say they've been brutalised - the tactics used are beyond belief."
Dr Rafiullah Bidar, regional director of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, on the treatment of detainees by the US in Afghanistan. Guardian, March 19.

Afghanistan is being transformed into an enormous US jail."
Nader Nadery, of the Human Rights Commission. Guardian, March 19.

One might have expected a little humility from the Bush administration after its destruction and occupation of Iraq."
Lindsey German, convenor of March 19th's anti-war protest in London. Independent, March 19.

I've not seen anything like this since the Julius Streicher Nazi campaign against Jews."
Mike Jempson, Mediawise, on The Sun's recent campaign against Travellers. bbc.co.uk, March 11.

War on gipsy free-for-all".
The Sun, March 9

The man who gave us the dodgy dossier is now giving us The Big Lie.... The man is rattled."
Liam Fox, co-chairman of the Tory party, Independent, March 19

Since its origin in the early 19th century, the term 'socialism' has evolved to mean many different things to many different people, and has been misused by dictatorships to describe their Draconian management of capitalism. Pieter Lawrence explores what 'socialism' really means.

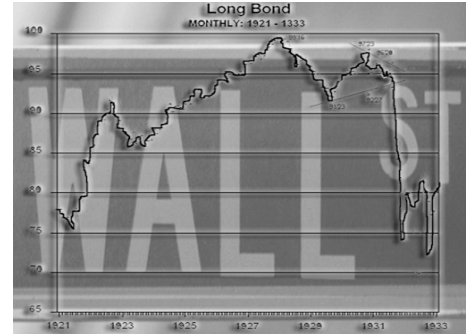
What socialism means



Levelling distinctions: the peasants' revolt



Engels and Marx



Inherently unpredictable: the market

Although the word socialism is itself more or less modern, its meaning can be said to go back to early religious sects of the ancient world and was taken up by religious dissidents in mediaeval times. Words attributed to John Ball during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 capture its meaning very well: "My friends, things cannot go well in England, nor ever, until everything shall be held in common, when there shall be neither vassal nor lord and all distinctions levelled, when lords shall be no more masters than ourselves."

But it was not until the 19th Century that the concept of socialism (or communism) was developed by utopian socialists and then more systematically by Marx and Engels. Since the early 19th Century socialism has meant an alternative, classless society which can be set out under three main headings as follows:-

- 1. Common Ownership.**
- 2. Democratic Control.**
- 3. Production solely for use.**

These features of socialist society would be dependent on each other and could only operate together as basic parts of an integrated social system. In combination, these define a way of organising society that in every important aspect of production, distribution, decision making and social administration, is clearly distinguished from the operation of capitalist society.

1. Common ownership means that the entire structure of production and all natural resources be held in common by all people. This means that every person will stand in equal relationship with every other person with respect to the means of producing the things we need to live, that is, mines, industrial plants, manufacturing units, all land and farms, and all means of transport and distribution. This also means the common ownership of all natural resources.

Perhaps "common ownership" is partly a misnomer because what is meant is that means of production and resources would not be owned by anyone. In place of the property relationships of owners and non-owners, means of production will simply be available to the whole community to be used and developed solely for the needs of all people.

2. Democratic control means that social policy would be decided by communities. In place of rule by governments, public decisions would be made by people themselves. One great advantage of democratic practice in socialism would be not only the organisation of decision making but also the freedom to carry out those decisions. This freedom of action would arise from direct control of community affairs following the enactment of common ownership and removal of the economic constraints of the capitalist system. Without powers of action decision-making is meaningless.

3. Production solely for use means just what it says. People in socialism would be free to co-operate voluntarily with each other in producing goods directly for the needs of the community. This would be useful labour co-operating to produce useful goods solely for consumption. Production solely for use would replace production for sale at a profit. Things produced for sale under the capitalist system are of course intended to supply a need of one kind or another but as commodities they are produced primarily with a view to money gain and the increase of money capital. As a general rule the market system is a system of 'no profit no production'. In socialism this profit motive would be entirely removed.

"To live in a classless society would be in the interests of all its members"

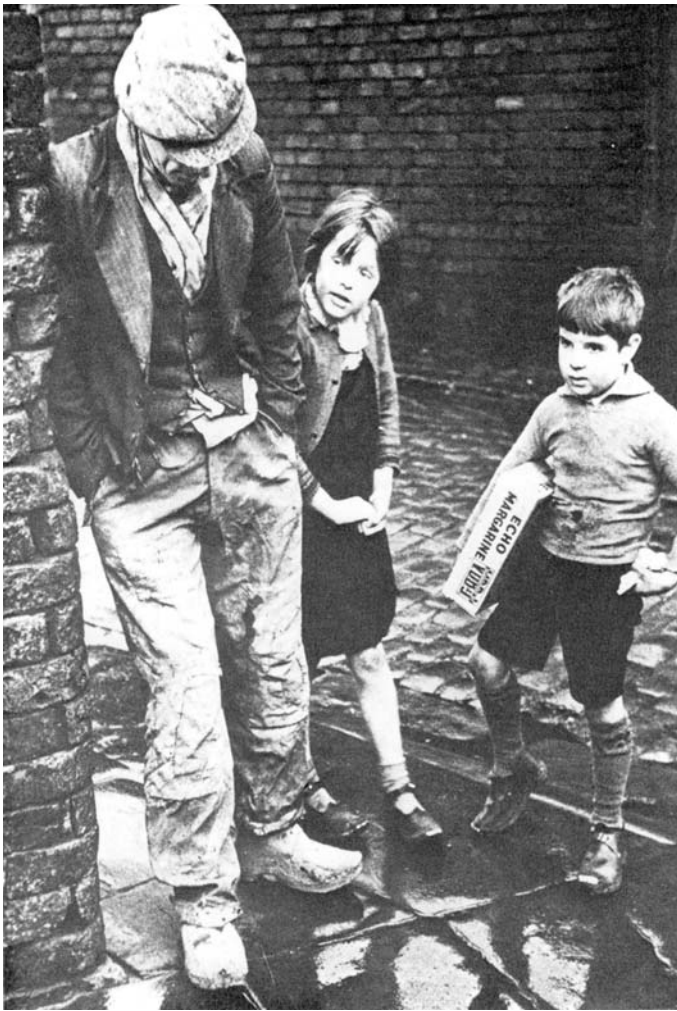
In a moneyless socialist society the factors of production would operate only in a useful form and not as economic categories with a price. Labour would not be wage labour serving the interests of an employer but would be free labour. People at work would be creating only useful things and not economic values from which profit is derived.

There should be no doubt that these basic features that define socialism clearly distinguished it from the capitalist system. Common ownership of means of production would be in direct opposition to private, corporate or state ownership; democratic control would be fundamentally different from rule by governments; production for needs would be in direct opposition to production for sale at a profit. These contrasting features of the two systems cannot be operated together; they are mutually exclusive. The mistaken idea that they can be operated together has been a major cause of political confusion about what socialism means.

Production solely for needs

What is meant by needs should not be understood as mere personal consumption. It should not suggest a rampant consumerist culture. Production for needs would include a wide range of considerations such as the need to protect and conserve the environment. In defining socialism we should emphasise that it will provide for one vital need in a way that is impossible under the capitalist system. This is the need of peoples throughout the world to bring the organisation of their community affairs under their own democratic control and to develop them in the interests of the whole community.

It was with the emergence of the capitalist system that society lost its direct control of its productive resources. In previous societies, accepting that they were ruled by privileged classes in their own interests, it was often the case that production was at near maximum capacity given the technology and resources



Crisis of capitalism: the depression

available and this determined what could be distributed. In times of good harvests the whole community could benefit in some shape or form. But with the development of the capitalist system this was eroded as what is produced depends crucially on what can be sold. This means that distribution through sale in the markets determines production and this is always less than what could be produced.

Market capacity is inherently unpredictable. If too many goods are produced for a market and they remain unsold, a crisis and recession may occur with reduced production, increased unemployment, bankruptcies, and large scale writing-off of capital values. Despite the many attempts that have been made, no theory of economic management has ever been able to predict or control the anarchic conditions of the market system. This is rule by market forces which serve minority interests and which generate the insecurities, crises and conflicts that shape the way we live. The fact that we have great powers of production that cannot be organised and fully used for the benefit of all people has devastating consequences and is at the root of most social problems.

In this way, the capitalist system places the production of goods and services,

on which the quality of all our lives depends, outside the direct control of society. Contrary to this, a socialist system would bring the entire organisation of production and distribution under democratic social control.

Social class

A further basic distinction between the two systems is that whereas the capitalist system is inherently class ridden, in socialism, social relationships of common ownership and equality will end class divisions. Much discussion of class centres on various sociological differences between groups which may be useful for some purposes. However, sociological differences can tell us little when seeking to explain how production is organised.

Some evidence may suggest, superficially, that we live in a society of greater equality. For example, we can accept that not so long ago "toffs" were

people who played golf and went on motoring holidays, touring the Continent. Now, many people from all walks of life do these things. This shows that these pursuits have become relatively cheaper and that some working people are now able to enjoy them, but this in no way alters the economic relationships of production. It does not alter the economic, class relationship between capital and labour which dominates the way we live. At the point of production, the workers and their employers who may be sharing a golf course in their leisure time remain in a

relationship of conflicting economic interests which, whilst it continues, must always condemn our society to the class divisions of strife and to the many ugly comparisons that we see of poverty amidst luxury. Class is a social relationship that invades and has a corrupting

influence on every part of our lives.

An economic definition of class based on the categories of capital and labour in a system of commodity production is basic to our explanation of how we produce and distribute wealth and the economic motives that are involved. Social class defined as economic relationships is a key to how the operation of the market puts profit before needs and places constraints on all our activities. Our lives and the quality of our society depend upon our relationships of production and on the services we can

provide. An analysis using economic/class categories tells us who gets what from the pool of wealth that is made available and how a privileged class has accumulated great wealth and property; it therefore explains the great social differences that we see about us.

In addition, we find that increasingly, giant global corporations own and control the world production of goods and services together with the natural resources of the planet. The sole object is to amass greater concentrations of capital and to increase their economic and political powers.

We live in a society of deep class divisions with a conflict of economic interests between those who work the productive system and those who own it. This economic conflict can only be reconciled by the relationships of equality and cooperation that would integrate the community in socialism.

Whilst it is right to feel outrage at the great class divisions that exist socialists do not come to this question in a negative spirit of class hostility. The aim is to end it. Class conflict has gone on for too long; there has been too much strife and we have to heal the wounds of history through entirely democratic means.

Class society is both morally and materially indefensible. It need not linger on and on as part of an outdated system. An ethical society would be one in which all people would live their lives, free from the disadvantages of under privilege and class injustice. To live in a classless society would be in the interests of all its members. Freedom for every person to develop their skills and talents on equal terms could benefit everyone. Equality has the potential to enrich all our lives and would be a basis for a true community of shared interests.

Socialism - a human-centred way of life

Having set out what socialism means, and having set out features that distinguish it clearly from capitalism, these can be summarised as one all important difference. Whereas the capitalist system works for sectional economic ends that are alien to the interests of the whole community, a socialist system would be wholly dedicated to the interests of all people. There would also be a difference of complexity and simplicity. Whereas, working within the complex economic limitations of the market system, our endeavours are frustrated and often blocked by the barriers of costs, in a socialist society, communities would be free to set up their goals and then organise their resources of labour, materials and technology to achieve them in a straightforward way. People in socialism would need only to work with the material factors of production and not any economic factors.

Given the control of human affairs that a socialist system would bring, people in socialism would be able to take charge of their destiny. What is undeniable is that we are a species with great talents. In science, technology, in art, crafts and design we can call upon a wide range of great skills. The point now is to release these for the benefit of humanity. ■

PIETER LAWRENCE

John Major didn't believe in 'class society', Margaret Thatcher didn't even believe in 'society', but private ownership is the defining factor of both. Meanwhile the concept of common ownership has only resulted in feeble nationalisation programmes. So, the question is:

What is common ownership?



The basis of any society is the way its members are organised for the production and distribution of wealth.

Where a section of society controls the use of the means of production, then there is a class society. Another way of putting this is that the members of this section or class own the means of production, since to be in a position to control the use of something is effectively to own it, whether or not this is accompanied by some legal title deed.

It follows that a classless society is one in which the use of the means of production is controlled by all members of society on an equal basis, and not just by a section of them to the exclusion of the rest. James Burnham put this rather well in a passage in his book *The Managerial Revolution*:

"For a society to be 'classless'

would mean that within society there would be no group (with the exception, perhaps, of temporary delegate bodies, freely elected by the community and subject always to recall) which would exercise, as a group, any special control over access to the instruments of production; and no group receiving, as a group, preferential treatment in distribution"

In a classless society every member is in a position to take part, on equal terms with every other member, in deciding how the means of production should be used. Every member of society is socially equal, standing in exactly the same relationship to the means of production as every other member. Similarly, every member of society has access to the fruits of production on an equal footing.

Once the use of the means of production is under the democratic

control of all members of society, class ownership has been abolished. The means of production can still be said to belong to those who control and benefit from their use, in this case to the whole population organised on a democratic basis, and so to be "commonly owned" by them. Common

ownership has been defined as:

"A state of affairs in which no person is excluded from the possibility of controlling, using and managing the means of production, distribution and consumption. Each member of society can acquire the capacity, that is to say, has the opportunity to realise a variety of goals, for example, to consume what they want, to use means of production for the purposes of socially necessary or unnecessary work, to administer production and distribution, to plan to allocate resources, and to make decisions about short term and long term collective goals. Common ownership, then, refers to every individual's potential ability to benefit from the wealth of society and to participate in its running" (Jean-Claude Bragard, *An Investigation of Marx's Concept of Communism*, his emphasis).

Even so, to use the word "ownership" can be misleading in that this does not fully bring out the fact that the transfer to all members of society of the power to control the production of wealth makes the very concept of property redundant. With common ownership no one is excluded from the possibility of controlling or benefiting from the use of the means of production, so that with reference to them the concept of property in the sense of exclusive possession is meaningless: no one is excluded, there are no non-owners.

We could invent some new term such as "no-ownership" and talk about the classless alternative society to capitalism being a "no-ownership" society, but the same idea can be expressed without having to do this if common ownership is understood as being a social relationship and not a form of property ownership. This social relationship-equality between human beings with regard to the control of the use of the means of production-can equally accurately be described by the terms "classless society" and "democratic control" as by "common ownership" since these three terms are only different ways of describing it from different angles. The use of the term "common ownership" to refer to the basic social relationship of the alternative society to capitalism is not to be taken to imply therefore that common ownership of the means of production could exist without democratic control. Common ownership means democratic control means a classless society.

When we refer to the society based on common ownership, generally we use the term "socialism", though we have no objection to others using "communism", since for us these terms mean exactly the same and are interchangeable.

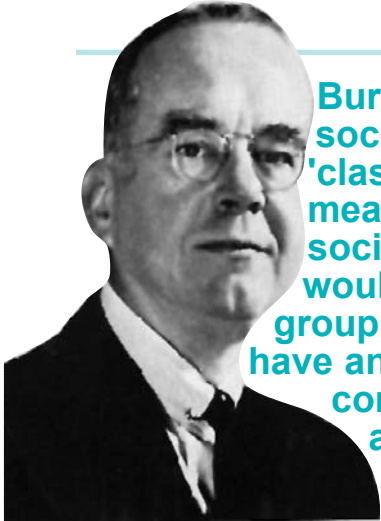
Not state ownership

Common ownership is not to be confused with state ownership, since an organ of coercion, or state, has no place in socialism. A class society is a society with a state because sectional control over the means of production and the exclusion of the rest of the population cannot be asserted without coercion, and so without a special



I don't think much of this Common Ownership idea, Margaret.

That's because you never owned the Commons, William.



Burnham: "For a society to be 'classless' would mean that within society there would be no group which would have any special control over access to the instruments of

production; and no group receiving preferential treatment in distribution"

organ to exercise this coercion. On the other hand, a classless society is a stateless society because such an organ of coercion becomes unnecessary as soon as all members of society stand in the same relationship with regard to the control of the use of the means of production. The existence of a state as an instrument of class political control and coercion is quite incompatible with the existence of the social relationship of common ownership. State ownership is a form of exclusive property ownership which implies a social relationship which is totally different from socialism.

Common ownership is a social relationship of equality and democracy which makes the concept of property redundant because there are no longer any excluded non-owners. State ownership, on the other hand, presupposes the existence of a government machine, a legal system, armed forces and the other features of an institutionalised organ of coercion. State-owned means of production belong to an institution which confronts the members of society, coerces them and dominates them, both as individuals and as a collectivity. Under state ownership the answer to the question "who owns the means of production?" is not "everybody" or "nobody" as with common ownership; it is "the state". In

other words, when a state owns the means of production, the members of society remain non-owners, excluded from control. Both legally and socially, the means of production belong not to them, but to the state, which stands as an independent power between them and the means of production.

The state is not an abstraction floating above society and its members; it is a social institution, and, as such, a group of human beings, a section of society, organised in a particular way. This is why, strictly speaking, we should have written above that the state confronts most members of society and excludes most of them from control of the means of production. For wherever there is a state, there is always a group of human beings who stand in a different relationship to it from most members of society: not as the dominated, nor as the excluded, but as the dominators and the excluders. Under state ownership, this group controls the use of the means of production to the exclusion of the other members of society. In this sense, it owns the means of production, whether or not this is formally and legally recognised.

Another reason why state ownership and socialism are incompatible is that the state is a national institution which exercises political control over a limited geographical area. Since capitalism is a world system, the complete state ownership of the means of production within a given political area cannot represent the abolition of capitalism, even within that area. What it does mean is the establishment of some form of state capitalism whose internal mode of operation is conditioned by the fact that it has to compete in a world market context against other capitals.

Since today capitalism is worldwide, the society which replaces capitalism can only be worldwide. The only socialism possible today is world socialism. No more than capitalism can socialism exist in one country. So the common ownership of socialism is the

common ownership of the world, of its natural and industrial resources, by the whole of humanity. Socialism can only be a universal society in which all that is in and on the Earth has become the common heritage of all humankind, and in which the division of the world into states has given way to a world without frontiers with a democratic world administration as well as local and regional democracy. ■

ADAM BUICK



Cooking the Books (1)

The other Adam Smith

Gordon Brown grew up in the Scottish seaside town of Kirkcaldy where his father was a minister in one of the local kirks.

Adam Smith was born there in 1723, though his father was a customs official. In February, at Brown's invitation, Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board, visited Kirkcaldy to deliver a lecture on Adam Smith.

Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was, said Greenspan, "one of the great achievements in human intellectual history". Smith's view that capitalists should be allowed by governments to pursue profits unhindered since, "led by an invisible hand", this resulted in the "public good" being promoted had, he argued, become "the sole remaining effective paradigm for economic organisation" (*The Times*, 7 February).

That's the side of Smith that is promoted by free-marketeers such as the Adam Smith Institute. But that's only one side of his theories. Do the free-marketeers - does Greenspan - know that the *Wealth of Nations* opens with a declaration that useful things are produced by labour: "The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessities and conveniences of life which it annually consumes"? Or that Smith went on to expound a labour theory of value: "Labour is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities" (Book I, chapter V)?

Smith even went so far as to identify profits as deriving from the value added by workers in the process of production:

"As soon as stock has accumulated in the hands of particular persons, some of them will naturally employ it in setting to work industrious people, whom they will supply with materials and subsistence, in order to make a profit by the sale of their work, or by what their labour adds to the value of the materials . . . The value which the workmen add to the materials . . . resolves itself . . . into two parts, of which one pays their wages, the other the profits of their employer upon the whole stock of materials and wages which he advanced" (Book I, chapter VI).

Smith's labour theory of value was refined by David Ricardo and used by early critics of capitalism to argue that the capitalists were exploiters who robbed the workers of a part of the product of their labour. Marx took over and further developed this labour theory of value as the basis for his analysis of capitalism which saw the capitalists' pursuit of profit as seeking to extract a maximum of unpaid labour from the working class.

The "public good" which Smith argued was promoted by letting capitalists pursue profits was an increase in the total amount of wealth in existence. Marx didn't deny this, but argued that under capitalism this increase was inevitably unevenly divided: more went to capitalists as accumulated capital than to the actual wealth-producers as increased wages (if that). What Smith's "invisible hand" did, if you like, was to build-up in this way the material basis for a socialist society of common ownership and democratic control. Which is the "sole effective paradigm" for ensuring that the productive forces built up under capitalism can be used for the benefit of all.



Common Ownership - No Exclusion Zones

How would common ownership and democratic control work in practice? Without a price mechanism some critics do not understand how signals can pass from the user to the producer or how decisions about production can be made. Yet such non-market systems already exist even within capitalism and a study of these can give useful insights into the practical operation of a socialist production and distribution system.

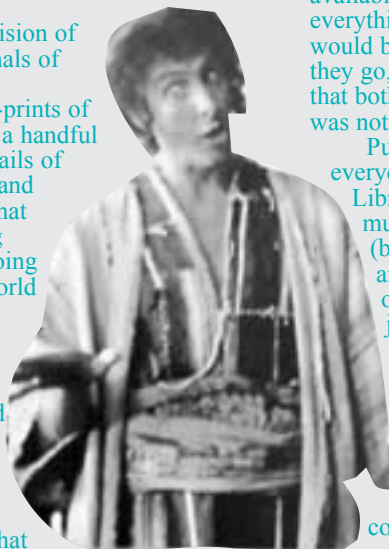
What distinguishes the Socialist Party from the leftists is that when we talk of common ownership we do not just include the means of production, but also, specifically, call for the common and democratic control of the means of distribution. Equal access to the common store without requirement of exchange or payment is one of the things we consider to be the hallmark of genuine socialism. After all, you cannot buy something you already own.

To people living in a society where everything has a price, where access to any aspect of our society from necessities to leisure and culture comes with a price tag, such a system seems alien, or possibly even naively utopian. Clever apologists of gross inequality and privilege even try to claim that it is categorically impossible to organise provision of any good or service without the vital signals of monetary exchange or market haggling.

Socialists are loath to draw up blue-prints of the future. It would be undemocratic for a handful of us now without access to the exact details of available resources and conditions to try and draw up rigid plans. We also recognise that there may not be one single way of doing things, and precise details and ways of doing things might vary from one part of the world to another, even between neighbouring communities. Of course, we can reach logical conclusions based on basic premises - that socialism will be necessarily democratic, for example - and can outline broad principles or options that could be applied. That is, we do not have to draw up a plan for socialism, but broadly demonstrate that it is possible.

We draw upon scientific methods, that is, we do not come up with a dream and try and fix it to reality, but, rather, we look to the real world to see how it is, and how it could be. Just as the market - the central feature of capitalism - predated the explosion of that society across the globe, so too are principles and practices that socialism could use latent in our world today. That is, provision of services based on free access at the point of use are more common in the world today than the ideologues of capitalism would have us believe.

Consider shopping in socialism. A person would walk into the store, browse the shelves, select what they want, and then arrange to take it away. They would take as much as they think



Whaddya mean, you won't haggle over economic calculation? I'm telling you it's a categorical impossibility mate. Now are you telling me this isn't worth ten shekels?



Organising without

they would need, sure in the knowledge that more will be readily available should they need more not to try and take and hoard everything. If what they want is not available, staff and procedures would be on hand to obtain the goods from another source. Before they go, they could let the store crew know what they've taken, so that both the staff and other consumers would know what was and was not available from the inventory.

Put like that, it sounds convoluted, but it is what happens everyday in local public libraries throughout Britain. Under the Libraries, Archives and Museums Act of 1963, local authorities must provide books and magazines free of charge, and obtain (by purchase if necessary, but usually from other libraries) anything they do not have immediately to hand. Currently, over 60 percent of library patrons get what they want from just cold calling into their local branch.

Big businesses provide a similar service. Blockbusters video stores provide rental goods for a charge per loan. Libraries too provide videos, and the difference between their operating parameters is clear. Big video stores overwhelmingly stock the latest hits in huge bundles, with older or niche films harder to find, while local libraries have a wider range of stock. Market provision leads to conformity more than conscious service. Libraries, however, are compelled by competition law not to undercut video stores (which they could do). That is, they are prevented from out-performing commercial rivals by legal fiat.

Libraries exhibit a number of non-monetary techniques for allocating resources, which they mix to various degrees, and each of which would be suitable for use in socialism. Library staff use published data to provide items to fulfil the publicly stated service level agreement in terms of the stock that users can assume they will find in the library. Once the stock is there, users can take it from the shelves on a first-come first served basis. If it is already taken, they can be put into a queue to receive it next, or they can order one to be brought in from another institution. If an item is highly popular, its terms of availability may be restricted to enable more people to have access



Could we use things money?

to it, and people always have the option of trying a different source of information. In some libraries, if some users have particular needs, they may have their borrowing limit increased to be able to take more items out.

That is, a mix of queuing, lottery and rationing are used in various mixtures to maximise the use of resources. Alongside this,

“(Non-market distribution) sounds convoluted, but it is what happens everyday in local public libraries throughout Britain.”

the library catalogue - the inventory of available stock which includes its current location and status - can be used to co-ordinate between both library users and staff so that everyone can control their use of the library and its goods. This information, unlike market information which travels at the speed of goods to market, travels at the speed of light. Today, it is possible to discover, via the internet, that the *Communist Manifesto* is available in the Mary L. Cook Public Library in Waynesville Ohio, shelved in the social sciences section. If that book were not available in a local library, it would be possible to ask them, possibly ultimately, to obtain it from this source.

Even the objections that these libraries exist within capitalism doesn't bear much scrutiny. Although they must buy their books, it is possible to calculate how much would need to be spent to maintain the agreed stock levels, and set the budget accordingly. Publishers often tailor their print runs to their expectations of the number of libraries that will stock a title (and will often cancel titles if too few institutions do not order it via pre-publication data). The money largely follows the quality management.

Some parts of library management now might not be needed. Currently, a lot of personal detail is held by libraries in order to help protect their stock and monitor its usage. To generalise this might require some sort of identity registration, which some people may or may not find objectionable; but even then, an anonymous system like loyalty cards wherein the bearer of the card can simply record information whenever they remove stock could be used to see what combinations of goods people generally withdraw in so as to help ordering and stocking the stores. Again, this is a detail that can be left to the people who will live in socialism, but it is clear that we do not need an authoritarian state dictating each person's precise ration as some commissars of capitalism might pretend.

This is just one, almost random example of the ways in which workers, with all their skills and experience of co-operating to run capitalism in the interests of the capitalists, could begin to run society in their own interest. We do not need to build the new society in the womb of the old, that is here already. What we need is to decide that we have the way to actively declare an end to unnecessary want, and build a free co-operative commonwealth so that "poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality and slavery to freedom." ■
PIK SMEET

Blockbuster profits

● The cinema and video industries make two things: films and, more importantly, money. Shed-loads of it and over a long period. In the 1920s *The Birth of a Nation* cost United Artists \$110,000 to produce; it eventually grossed sixty million (thanks due to L. Menand in the 7 February issue of the *New Yorker* for that and some other facts in this article). More recently, *Titanic* took in \$1.85 billion at the box office - many times what it cost. Of course some films don't make money and some even lose it. But overall Hollywood, Bollywood and lesser-known 'woods' are oligarchies designed for the enrichment of the oligarchs.

It isn't just the movie business that seeks and makes a

profit from movies. The key to the system is marketing. A lot of money is spent on creating "buzz" - a diffused sense in the public that a particular movie is on the way. Previews are part of "buzz", as is "coverage" of forthcoming movies in media outlets that are often owned by the same conglomerate that owns the studio. The makers of *Jurassic Park* sold a hundred licences for a thousand dinosaur products.

The content of the films and videos reflects conditions in the world of which they are part. Soon after 9/11 Hollywood temporarily abandoned the hyperviolent spectacles that dominated cinema in the late 1990s. The public was thought to be in need of escape from such horrors. However, by 2003 it was a return to business as usual. *Daredevil*, *Cold Mountain*, *Gods and Generals* and *The Core* offered spectacles of

contemporary, futuristic or historical destruction and carnage.

A recent British study of blockbuster audiences (by M. Jancovich, and L. Faire, 'The best place to see a film', in *Movie Blockbusters*) indicates that at least some audiences are not happy with the conditions in which they are paying customers. Apparently a fairly common complaint is that the cinema is an emotionally cold place. The audience is a mass but not a community. There's no place to interact with one another or talk about the film afterwards.

What of the future of the cinema and the video in socialism? To some extent I go along with the safe but insipid view that "the people at the time will decide". But I'd like to be a

bit braver (or more foolhardy?) than that. I endorse Menand's rejection of films that include any combination of wizards, slinky women of few words, men who can expertly drive anything or leap safely from the top of anything, characters from comic books, explosions, a computer whizz with attitude, or an incarnation of pure evil. I hope there will be more films like Mike Leigh's *Vera Drake*, a moving and beautiful depiction of British working-class life in the 1950s. ■

STAN PARKER



Vera Drake: No bombs, bangs or busted blocks, just good film-making.

The Rise and Fall of the NHS

Can capitalism ever run the NHS effectively, or is Labour's 1948 flagship doomed always to navigate dangerous waters? CYR investigates.

 The National Health Service is trumpeted as the finest achievement of the Labour Party throughout its entire history. For years Labour supporters when tackled on the non-socialist and pro-capitalist nature of the Labour Party would reply with the one riposte, 'Ah, but what about the NHS?' Regarded by many Labour supporters as a socialist measure and holding out a promise of solving one of the most distressing problems of being a worker, being looked after when you were ill, it is hardly surprising that it was seen as a huge step forward in working class emancipation. One reform out of the multitude of reforms put into practice by a reformist party has survived - has it worked?

What did the NHS claim to do at its inception? Its chief architect Aneurin Bevan was very sure of his aims: it was to be an institution which would take care of all the medical needs of the working class for evermore and, hold your breath, without charge. However expensive the treatment might be medical attention could be obtained for all. For free! But it left a question hanging in the air, why was it only the working class who needed this ambitious solution? There was no problem for the capitalist class, who didn't need a health service. They could obtain all that was available from existing medical services by paying for it.

However, in the context of the time and given the pro capitalist inclinations of the Labour Party it was a bold, even visionary solution to the poor state of health of the mass of the working class after a long period of economic depression followed by six years of war. A situation, that had already been a serious cause of concern for government before the war. (Though in some respects the wartime diet plus the fact that unemployment had virtually ended for the duration had improved health standards). The NHS plan struck an immediate chord with the mass of the working class who saw in it a promise

for massive changes for the better in the post-war period. Carried away by the prospect of free teeth and glasses for all, the NHS helped to allay the grim years of rationing and shortages and helped to secure a second term for the Labour Government.

Bevan is usually given sole credit for the NHS, but the real picture is slightly different. Like its companion, the Beveridge scheme for social security, it was implemented by the Labour Party but had the support of other parties, who generally recognised that some form of welfare was badly needed. So the NHS did not spring from nothing, as with the big bang theory of the Universe.

There had been health provision for the working class before the war that was free of charge, but it had been very haphazard, with some areas over supplied and others very badly neglected. Also it relied upon charity. It was not there by right and most people saw a big difference. Bevan promoted a scheme that would abolish the stigma and unpredictability of charity and was comprehensive and open to all. And he

had to fight for it, even against opposition within his own party, and from the British Medical Association, who saw a threat to their own power within a government run scheme. But once the scheme had been publicised there was no going back.

Yet those were minor obstacles compared to a force that neither Bevan nor the Labour Party has ever properly understood, the forces of capitalist economics.

Money problems

The NHS had to be paid for, and the money had to come from the capitalist class. Ever since its inception the history of the NHS has been a story of trying to provide adequate funding. Every government has looked for ways to find the money and cut the costs, and every government has failed. The original set-up has been modified, tinkered with or altered repeatedly, all we are told in the interests of efficiency. And every government produces a fresh plan with a fanfare of trumpets that promises to solve all problems. Bevan initiated a reform that would prove to be one of the biggest headaches of all time for his own party or for any party trying to run capitalism, including Margaret Thatcher, who thought she had the magic formula to solve all problems, privatisation, but



ended up by spending as much as anyone.

In truth there are many factors within capitalism which augur badly for the NHS. Although the trend for well-established capitalist countries is to move

from a production economy to a service economy, this can have problems.

Manufactured goods, once they are into full mass production generally go down in price, because they embody less labour-power. This is why the absolute standard of living of sections of the working class has improved.

But not all wealth can be mass-produced. Many jobs that require intensive labour-power cannot be made more productive by technology. But wages paid have to come into line with those of production workers where fewer workers still produce as much or more. This is why it is so expensive to have such things as electrical or building work done. Nursing comes into this category: you can't replace a nurse by a machine (although they do their best). So, if there are going to be enough nurses to run a

health service the total cost of nursing care has to go up. In addition to which, nurses have to be trained to manage the increasing technical demands of modern health care.

The government try to overcome this problem by the well-used tactic of recruiting from countries with lower wages, such as the West Indies, South Africa and Poland. Another tried and tested solution favoured by employers is that of up-grading, i.e. allowing some tasks to be undertaken by those not previously regarded as having the necessary skills; for example, encouraging nurses to undertake minor surgery, thus relieving some pressure on doctors.

But this is minor, compared to the increasing costs of drug treatment, which have risen to astronomical proportions since the NHS was founded. When Bevan dreamed up his panacea for the working class of Britain, which was going to be

the envy of the world, the practice of medicine was not as advanced as it is today. Drug treatment, as we know it today, apart from the heavy reliance on aspirin and the wartime use of penicillin, was unknown. Modern medical science was more or less born during the Second World War and it has made giant strides since, especially with regard to costs. Developing a modern medical drug can cost millions of pounds. And, as every reader of any newspaper must have noticed, new, 'wonder drugs' are launched with astonishing frequency, generally leading newspaper articles somewhere asking indignantly, "Why cannot this life saving drug be made available to anyone who needs it?" The pressures on the NHS are relentless, all of them making for increasing costs.

Population trends are swelling the numbers of old in relation to the young, and as we all know older people tend to have more illnesses, and their illnesses are more likely to take the form of expensive operations such as hip replacements. All these items are creating big problems for the NHS, and resulting in intensive press coverage, most of it highly critical, especially when it comes to waiting lists. It must be pointed out that this does not just apply to the NHS. Other capitalist institutions, paid for out of taxation levied upon the wealthy, are being cut, notably the armed forces, the police force and the fire service. And private (more or less) firms, which cannot apply technology to reduce costs (read, manpower), like the post office, are cutting the numbers of branches. So, what does the future hold for the NHS and its equivalents in other capitalist countries?

Decline

As the longest running institution of its kind the NHS is probably the creakiest in Europe, but there is nothing special about British capitalism that makes it more likely than any other to undergo decline. Most European countries are already showing signs of strain in funding their welfare systems and what applies to the UK must inevitably follow with them.

The conclusion must be that to fulfil the professed aims of Bevan for a health service that would cover the needs of the

working class was never more than a pipe dream. No government will dare to upset their masters to the extent necessary to maintain a decent health service. The most likely prognosis is that it will carry on much as now with an increasing bias towards private hospitals and treatment that is paid for at the point of consumption. In fact it never lived up to its hype from the

beginning; within months charges were being introduced for dental and optical services. There is no such thing as an adequate health service within a capitalist

system of society and there never can be. It seems the current trend is to go back to something similar to pre NHS, and have a two tier system where what you get will be what you pay for. The rise in private hospitals and health insurance is a potent



Peaks and troughs: a newly-opened ward in 1948 above and, below, a newly-closing hospital in more recent times



symbol of this trend.

No doubt most workers will conclude that any deficiencies in the NHS can be put right by a change of government and that it lies within the power of the political process to achieve a viable health system. This is a fallacy. The money system we live under is inherently biased towards satisfying the demands of a minority ruling class who are only concerned with having a working class fit enough to go to work and fight their wars for them. Capitalism can never be run in the interests of the majority and in any case will always throw up new problems of ill health as it progresses. The rickets and tuberculosis of the Victorians are being replaced by more sophisticated illnesses such as heart failure, stress and obesity of a more modern age, not to mention AIDS.

In a socialist society where the capacity for wealth production, unhampered by the colossal waste endemic to this one, can be released to the full, human values will predominate and energy can be concentrated on the causes of disease and its prevention. Issues such as the need for pharmaceuticals to make billions of pounds in profit will not exist. The NHS has managed to carry on so far as a more or less viable service largely due to the dedication and hard work of its members but this cannot last forever. ■

CYR

“The rickets and tuberculosis of the Victorians are being replaced by more sophisticated illnesses such as heart failure, stress and obesity”

The profit motive: a case study

In January Sony, the multinational electronics corporation, announced it is to declare 300 redundancies at its two factories in south Wales - 80 from the Bridgend factory, producing cathode ray tubes, and 220 from the TV factory adjacent to the M4 at Pencoed - a move that almost certainly signals the imminent closure of an operation that once employed 3,300 working people. This latest news will be of no surprise to those working in the two factories where Sony has been quietly shedding jobs since the late 1990s.

Production from these factories relies on 'old' tube technology and, as a spokesman explained, "The move away from CRT-based TVs accelerated last year with flat panel products now accounting for around half the UK market" (Guardian, 21 January). It is now evident that the managers employed in Japan to make profits for shareholders had decided by the late 1990s that investment to support flat screen televisions would go elsewhere and after 30 years have decided to call it a day in Wales. So where did it all go wrong?

Sony's Bridgend factory, officially opened by Prince Charles in 1974, was the first major manufacturing venture in the UK by a Japanese multinational corporation. The main imperative of capitalism is to expand - a fact well understood in Japan where by 1972 the country had the largest television industry in the world producing in excess of 8 million sets a year and a domestic market on the verge of saturation. Japanese exports had already devastated the American television industry and while UK imports of Japanese colour TVs were rising, UK manufacturers found some comfort under a 1962 treaty that limited imports of Japanese televisions.

Sony needed unrestricted access to European television market and the UK government was on the verge of joining the European Economic Community (EEC). Assembling televisions inside Europe would circumvent the agreement limiting imports and end the stream of accusations from European manufacturers that Japanese televisions were being 'dumped' on the

market at 'uneconomic' prices.

Welcomed

The British government was friendly to Japanese investment and politicians quickly warmed to the prospect of new jobs. This, combined with financial grants made available to ease job losses in traditional coal and steel industries, an established market and a region crying out for employment made Wales an attractive proposition. Bridgend was to be Sony's assembly base to compete in the EEC, a venture viewed by Britain's partners in Europe, particularly in Holland - the home of Philips - as a 'Trojan Horse,' an apt description for a company importing 90 percent of its components from Japan. In 1976 the British government, under pressure from the EEC and the European television industry, moved to protect 'home' producers. It agreed that unless 50 percent by value of components had European origin, sets could not claim to be 'British-made' and would therefore count towards Japanese import quotas agreed between the two industries. By this time, however, Sony was operational and employing over 500 people and compliance with this 'origin rule' was quietly forgotten.

Other Japanese television manufacturers followed and by 1977 Britain had 'overcapacity' in both set and component manufacture. The Radio Industry Council made representations to government for protection and again policy was altered. In future inward investment was to be encouraged provided it either took over existing capacity or resulted in joint ventures with established manufacturers - hence Rank-Toshiba and GEC-Hitachi. But by 1979 it was apparent that British television manufacturers were unable to compete with Japanese design and manufacturing technology and in October 1980, Pye at Lowestoft was shut with the loss of 1,100 jobs. Despite the higher wages paid to Japanese workers, "the direct labour cost of a set made in the UK was almost double that of one made in Japan because the

Japanese set took 1.9 hours to make and the British one 6.1 hours." (Keith Geddes, *The Setmakers*, 1991) Japanese television sets incorporated 30 percent fewer components by making greater use of integrated circuits, and automatic insertion accounted for 65 percent of components against 15 percent in the UK. These advantages forced a spate of factory closures and 'consolidations' as European producers tried desperately to compete.

Sony's output at Bridgend had now increased to a level that justified investment in a tube-manufacturing factory, built alongside the television factory and opened in 1982. This expansion was essential because Sony holds patent rights to a cathode ray tube - "Trinitron" - fundamentally different from its competitors and available only from Sony in Japan.



Cathode Ray Tubes - so last year...



Sony TVs, a view to a killing.

Local production was needed to reduce enormous importation costs. Further expansion to tube manufacturing came in 1989 when the television factory was relocated to a site 3 miles away allowing the tube factory to double in size. The new television factory - hailed as Sony's 'European Flagship' - was constructed on former farmland in Pencoed and opened in 1992 at a cost of £30 million. By the early 1990s Sony had a major share of the European television market and was locked in bitter competition with Philips. Output peaked at about 1.75 million televisions and

*Wage-end at
Bridgend: First
Sony giveth, then
Sony taketh away,
then Sony
investeth
somewhere else.*



computer monitors were added to the production line-up. The combined turnover of both plants was approximately £800 million.

But then things started to go sour. Intense competition from manufacturers producing high quality, low cost televisions and the collapse of a major market in Russia started to eat away at profits. The market demanded cost reductions, and Sony - which had traded for so long on a brand name that

marketing gurus had made synonymous with quality and price premiums - could not deliver, at least in Wales. A further threat emerged as Sony's recently opened television-factory in Barcelona, employing the latest technology, gathered momentum.

The 'centre of gravity' of the European TV market was moving eastwards and factories in Wales were no longer suitably placed. The company then negotiated generous grants and tax concessions and, eager to exploit cheap labour, opened new factories in Hungary and Slovakia to improve competitiveness in the growing east European market that had once been supplied by the Pencoe factory. The factories in Wales had served their purpose and utilising 'old' technology were now to be run-down while 'new' technology and investment went elsewhere. The workforce now lived under threat that production would be transferred unless profits improved, serving to keep wages and benefits fixed, while the trade union, effectively anaesthetised since the 1970s, collaborated with management on projects to increase profits. Desperate to cut costs, investment in manufacturing was slashed; internal component production contracted out, permanent workers were replaced by temporary employees and leavers not replaced. Discipline became oppressive and workers grew demoralised and indifferent to the continuous demands to improve performance. The company's reputation as an employer plummeted and official redundancies were first declared in April 2000.

The bottom line

So who is to blame? Why did the bubble burst? It would be easy to blame local management employed to squeeze profits from working people or the working people who became dispirited or perhaps even market conditions. But all this evades the fundamental issue that we live in an economic system that demands that corporations must roam the world in pursuit of lower costs to remain competitive to increase profits for shareholders. Sony, like any other corporation with global aspirations, cannot stop to consider how its working people, many employed since the beginning in 1974, are to survive when the factories in Wales close, as they must surely

do in the near future. The fact that Wales already suffers dire poverty and comparable jobs will virtually impossible to find is of no consequence on the balance sheet, where the only consideration can be the bottom line. It should not be forgotten that the social cost of Sony's years of successful profit-making in Wales was achieved at the expense of forcing thousands from employment in factories across Europe with all the misery and trauma this entails. The wheel has turned full circle and it is now the turn of people employed by Sony in Wales to be abandoned, cast aside in the pursuit of greater profits. This is capitalism.

In capitalist society there can be no allegiance or loyalty to a workforce or community. Production is motivated solely by profit, regardless of the social consequences. As a recent article in the Economist states, 'corporate social responsibility' - "a kinder, gentler capitalism," is a non-starter. Instead, we learn:

"The goal of a well-run company may be to make profits for its shareholders, but merely by doing that+the company is doing good works. Its employees willingly work for the company in exchange for wages; the transaction makes them better off" (22 January).

Now we are asked to shallow the outrageous proposition that capitalism has a benevolent social purpose - but try telling

that to the people until recently employed by Sony or those formerly employed by the thousands of other companies that have shed working people when higher profits are demanded. The choice is stark; the working class either sells its labour power in return for wages or salaries or goes without the essentials of life. This is not willingness but compulsion. It is wage slavery.

Capitalism has outlived its usefulness and must be immediately replaced by socialism. Capitalism divides the world's population into two classes, the majority who sell their labour power in return for wages and salaries and those who own the means of producing wealth and live on profits. It is class struggle where workers will always be the losers, with the impending closure of Sony in south Wales a testimony to opposing class interests of workers and owners. As ex-Sony workers go about rebuilding their lives, they, and working people everywhere would do well to reflect on the fact that capitalism cannot operate in any other way and is incapable of being reformed to do so. Like millions before them, capitalism has condemned these workers to an uncertain future, breeding the stress and anxiously that is linked to a Jobcentre interview likely to lead nowhere. ■

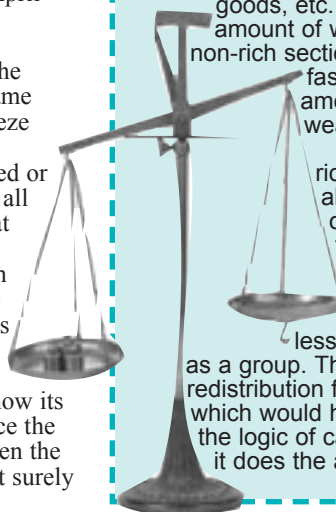
STEVE TROTT



What classless society?

At one time, a long time ago now, when the Labour Party still retained some sort of vague commitment to being opposed to the workings of capitalism it used to say that it favoured the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. They were going (they said) to establish a more equal society by taxing the rich and using the money to provide better public services for the rest of us.

Actually, in the last century there was a long-term trend towards a less uneven distribution of wealth ownership. But this did not result from any deliberate policy on the part of governments (the wealthy soon found ways of minimising or avoiding taxes on their existing wealth and on their accumulation of more wealth), but rather from a majority of people coming to own more consumer goods, etc. resulting in the total amount of wealth owned by the non-rich sections of society rising faster than the total amount owned by the wealthy.



The rich still got richer - and, in absolute terms, each one of them got more than each of the rest of us - but, proportionately, together they got less than the rest of us as a group. There was no redistribution from them to us; which would have gone against the logic of capitalism involving as it does the accumulation of more

and more capital in the hands of a capitalist class.

In the 1990s this long-term trend (which continued even under Thatcher) was reversed. Since 1991 the rich have been getting richer faster than the rest of us - despite a Labour government. In December the Office for National Statistics published the figures for the latest available year, 2002. Two sets of figures are published, one for all marketable wealth and the other for "marketable wealth less value of dwellings". Since capitalism is based on the concentration of the ownership of the means of wealth-production in the hands of a tiny minority, and since houses are not means of production, it is the second set of figures that are the more relevant (even if they still include other items of wealth such as cars and hi-fi equipment that are also not means of production).

These figures (published on the ONS website at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cc/nugget_print.asp?ID=2) show how things have changed since 1996, as the situation inherited by the present Labour government when it came into office:

	1996	1999	2000	2001	2002
Top 1% owned	26	34	33	34	35
Top 5%	49	59	59	58	62
Bottom 95%	51	41	41	42	38
Bottom 50%	6	3	2	2	2

As can be seen, whereas in 1996 the top 5 percent owned as much as the bottom 95 per cent - or one out of every 19 persons owned as much as the other 19 (of whom half owned virtually nothing) taken together - by 2002 the top 5 percent owned nearly 40 percent than the rest of us.

Who says that we're living in a classless society? Who says that the capitalist class have died out? Who says that the Labour Party can deliver a more equal society or is even trying to?

More reasons not to shop

Joanna Blythman: *Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets*. Harper Perennial £7.99.



Supermarkets: places to buy food at low prices, selling a wide range of produce in bright well-lit shops situated in convenient locations, with everything designed to make life easier for customers. If that's your view of what supermarkets

are, then *Shopped* is likely to change your mind.

For one thing the illusion of choice is just that - an illusion. Many companies make ready meals for a variety of supermarket chains, for instance. More generally, the supermarkets sell what suits them, not what the customer might want. Fruit and veg in particular have to fit a standard model in terms of size, colour and shape, just because that makes them easier (= cheaper) to transport and display. Any offerings that don't come up to standard (e.g. because of minor blemishes) will be rejected, at the supplier's expense. This might include, for instance, cauliflowers that are 'not white enough'. One consequence of this emphasis on uniformity is a drastic reduction in the number of varieties grown, which puts in danger the genetic spread that can help to reduce the impact of disease.

The suppliers (from largish companies to small farmers) are often at the supermarkets' mercy in other ways too. They may be encouraged to sell their produce to one chain exclusively, invest in new equipment, and then be dropped from the approved list for no apparent reason. If they complain about the supermarket's stranglehold on their sales, they will be threatened with delisting. Customer complaints are passed on by the supermarkets to the suppliers. Low prices at the counter are enabled by ever-lower prices to the supplier: cereal farmers, for instance, get just 8 percent of the price of a loaf of bread.

Supermarket profits of course come not just from the way they exercise their power over the suppliers, but from the way they exploit their own staff. With pay rates at levels like £4.94 an hour, compared to the £4million that the boss of Tesco's was paid in 2003, it's easy to see why some of the bigger chains have an annual staff turnover exceeding 20 percent.

And the 'fresh' food they sell is often not fresh at all. It is quite likely picked prematurely, before developing its full flavour, so it can withstand a few days' shelf life and then a few more in the customer's home. Taste and nutrition come a long way second to appearance and how long the food will keep. Wholesale markets like Covent Garden now supply greengrocers and

restaurants with decent fruit and veg, while supermarket shelves are weighed down with tasteless, unripe pap, much of it grown on vast plantations in places such as Lincolnshire.

Nor is food-selling the be-all-and-end-all. Supermarkets have for some time been expanding into areas like insurance, wills, credit cards, books, CDs, key-cutting, and so on. If they could get away with it, they'd probably stop selling unprocessed food (processed food is far more profitable), but they know that 'fresh' meat and veg does get customers into the stores. Tesco is approaching a 30 percent share in UK consumer spending (that's total spending, not just on food).

One of the blurbs the cover of *Shopped* says it "should be required reading in every household". Well, the *Socialist Standard* would be a better choice for this, but *Shopped* does give a pretty good idea of the power of big companies under capitalism and the reasons why the customer is certainly not in charge.

PB

The Windmills of Change

In Search of Sustainability. Edited by J. Goldie, B. Douglas, and B. Furnass. CSIRO Publishing, Australia 2005.

Sustainability can be an unquestionably good thing or not - it depends on what you want to sustain. In this collection of twelve essays by academics in different fields of environmental research the editors define sustainability as "the capacity of human systems to provide for the full range of human concerns in the long term."

Sustainability, when applied to humans, refers both to long-term survival of our species and the quality of our lives."

There are chapters on ten areas of concern: health, inequality, limited growth, land use, water, climate change, energy, transport, work and population. A final chapter is about achieving a sustainable future. The recommendations are all of a



All at sea: an off-shore wind farm

"motherhood" nature and well known to those in the environmental trade. For example, "children must better understand the ecological framework within which the human species lives", we must "shift away from the pursuit of economic growth as an end in itself" and promote "affordable renewable technologies."

Plenty of talk about key issues we must address, challenges we must face, changes in our current approaches we must make. But not a solid word about the need to fundamentally change the system from capitalism to something else. Capitalism does get a mention in the article on limiting growth, but the worry there is that capitalism will collapse and throw everything into chaos.

The editors believe that sustainability "can provide the vision we need to draw together the government, the private sector community and academics to help solve our many deep-seated problems." So no real revolution there, then. Indeed, one of the contributors trots out what amounts to the "human nature" objection to socialism. Comparing modern nation-states to ancestral warring tribes, he suggests that "this competitiveness, selfishness and 'short termism' is deeply programmed into the human species." It may suit defenders of capitalism to draw attention to such alleged deep programming, but socialists rely on other demonstrable characteristics of the human species: mutual aid, co-operation and (despite the dominant ideology of capitalism) the capacity to think and plan for the long term.

SRP

TV Review

Apocalypse Not Yet

Supervolcano
Sun 13th and Mon 14th March, BBC1
Supervolcano: The Truth About Yellowstone
Sun 13th and Mon 14th March, BBC2

Considering that science is a constant adventure of astonishing discovery it's amazing how many people have no interest in it, a fact which explains why 'serious' programmes like BBC *Horizon* are nevertheless obliged to adopt a relentlessly sensational and tabloid approach to everything they do. Drama documentaries about super-eruptions killing off most of the USA are the apotheosis of TV schedulers' attempts to tick their public service education boxes and still keep the viewers. 'Super-volcano overdue!' they cry. 'Millions dead!' 'Civilisation in ruins!' Buried underneath a hundred feet of hyperbole, like a dead dog at Pompeii, is the prosaic fact that this event is only really expected some time in the next 60,000 years and that meanwhile there may be more pressing concerns facing us all.

One wonders if viewers would be so interested if the offending volcano was one of those in the Sumatra chain, like the Toba volcano that apparently brought us to the edge of extinction 74,000 years ago. Or does the idea of cataclysm in the heart of the world's only superpower carry with it the extra frisson of schadenfreude, as we contemplate the Americans being spectacularly trashed instead of dishing it out for a change? Perhaps it is simply logical that a major disaster in America would have more far-reaching effects across the world because as we all know America is the prop holding up global civilisation.

Interest in supervolcanoes and Yellowstone in particular was sparked by



The Pinatubo eruption - peanuts by comparison

Horizon five years ago, but the recent tsunami has primed the TV viewer for a big 'what-if' docu-drama and the sleeping giant in Wyoming is clearly an irresistible subject. Besides, Hollywood proved with *'The Day After Tomorrow'* that disaster sells, especially if you sex up the boring facts a little. Given that capitalism is such a miserable struggle for existence for most people there's a strong psychological impulsion to comfort oneself in the knowledge that things could be a lot worse, and for morale's sake it's best to find something that can't be blamed on capitalism.

But for all the Armageddon prophesying, what would really be the result of such an event? The four horsemen of the apocalypse would have to ride forth and ravage the New World in their spare time, since they're already so busy elsewhere. Imagine making a programme with the idea that five million kids were going to die pointlessly because they couldn't get decent drinking water. Viewers would switch over to Pop Idols immediately. Natural disasters like that happen already, so what's exciting about that? Besides, goes the secret thinking, they're just poor black kids and they've all got AIDS anyway.

What would make a programme like this truly scary is if it was made in the context of a cooperative socialist society. If socialists wanted to give each other nightmares, they couldn't do better than

paint millenarian scenarios of a breakdown of production and a return to capitalism to each other. But of course, people in a socialist society would be life-affirming and positive about the future, not paranoid and neurotic neurasthenics paralysed into hopeless contemplation of a society that is in reality one long slow-motion train-wreck. Yellowstone wouldn't kill a fraction of the people that capitalism routinely kills every year. Capitalism is the world's worst natural disaster bar none. Now, where's the drama documentary about that?

PJS.

Africa: A Marxian Analysis.

A 30-page pamphlet on Africa, mainly reprints of articles from the *Socialist Standard* and mainly written by socialists living in Africa. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to:

- **state and class in pre-colonial West Africa**
- **Tribalism**
- **colonialism and capitalism**
- **religion, race and class**
- **Sharia law in Nigeria**
- **the education system in Ghana**
- **South Africa in the 20th century**

Available from *The Socialist Party*. £1.
(£1.35 by post, send cheque payable to
"The Socialist Party of Great Britain" to
52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN).

Obituary

JOHN BALL

John was someone I first came across in the early 90s in Norwich along with Heather prior to us all being properly acquainted with the Socialist Party. Our enthusiasm for responsible anti-authoritarian values and the politics of a world so different from this one, along with the reasonably close proximity of our houses helped to create a lasting bond and friendship.

John was born in Plumstead, in London, in 1932 and worked for most of his working life as an electrician. He was a warm and generous person, very down to earth who would call a spade a spade; at the same time he could be very understanding with people he got close to whose conclusions may have been different from his own, seeing the basis of those conclusions as a possible connection to build on. He was well-read and enjoyed connecting with people of all ages and backgrounds and had a penchant for helping the underdog sometimes to the detriment of his health. He was a vegan, painted in oils, and loved upbeat music and dancing.

Towards the end of his life John would say that he felt ever more convinced that the Party's sole pursuit of socialism and not reformism was the correct and only practical solution to the ongoing problems that a capitalist world is always throwing up. He recognised the importance of humour, connected to a constructive politics and philosophy in contrast to the sober authoritarian politics of the Left he was always falling foul of in the earlier period of his life (he had been in the Communist Party, which he left in 1957, and then in the Trotskyist SLL, from which he was expelled in 1960).

John died in February. I'm sure his way of being would and did affect positively many people he had come across throughout his life.

STAIR

Fifty Years Ago

For what is the Labour Party fighting?

Having had six years in power running capitalism the Labour Party is on the outside looking around for a way to get back again. Now as it is not generally thought that the Labour Government merely ran capitalism let us explain what we mean by capitalism, in order to see if we are correct when we claim that the Labour Party is just another capitalist party.

Capitalism is the social system which exists today throughout the world, wherein the means of production and distribution are owned by a fraction of the people (the capitalist class, state or private) and the mass of people being without means of production MUST work for WAGES in order to live. Further the wealth of capitalist society (produced by the workers but not owned by them) is produced for SALE and PROFIT, that

profit being the capitalists' loot from the exploitation of the class of employees. To sum up, the basic features of capitalism are - class ownership - wage labour, buying and selling and profit.

You will note we say class ownership not private enterprise, we say "state or private" because it is the basis we are concerned with not merely the form of administration. From the very start the Labour Party never sought to change the basis, to abolish capitalism, they merely proposed another form of administration. After six years in Government the whole ugly structure of capitalism remained intact, and still no proposal to abolish wages, buying and selling and class ownership is forthcoming. The Labour Party has no horizons beyond those of capitalism and when all the schemes have been put into operation the position of the working class will be exactly the same. The past record of the Labour Party in supporting wars, freezing wages, breaking strikes, and forming coalitions, with Tories and

Liberals, should be enough to finish them with the working class for keeps; the tragedy is that it won't. (...)

Throughout its existence the Labour Party has done everything but what need doing most and said everything but what most needed saying. Although from time to time they paid lip-service by using Socialist sounding phrases when it met their purpose of deluding the workers, nothing they have ever said or done has advanced the workers one inch. While certain of their reforms might have helped in keeping workers contented and in staving off unrest, they have had the desired effect of giving the boss class a new lease of life. What would the capitalist class do without a Labour Party to patch up their vile system for them?

(From an article by 'H.B.', *Socialist Standard*, April 1955)



Election News

By the time you read this the general election campaign might be officially under way. As announced, the Socialist Party is standing a candidate (Danny Lambert) in the Vauxhall constituency in South London. Our Head Office, which is in the constituency, is serving as the campaign rooms. If you want to help get the socialist message across against the Gang of Three (Labour,

Liberal, Tory: Same Old Futile Story) and their apprentices in the Green Party (and other would-be managers of capitalism such as RESPECT and VANITAS), phone 0207 622 3811 or call in at 52 Clapham High St, SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North).

If you are connected to the internet you can also follow the campaign on a daily basis by visiting the site of our campaign blog "Vaux Populi" at <http://spgb.blogspot.com>

World Socialism Needs You!

Without your support and understanding Socialism cannot be achieved. If you want to join the Socialist movement, to help to bring capitalism to a rapid end, go along to your nearest Branch or send for a membership application form.

Please send me an application form and membership details (without obligation).

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

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.....

POSTCODE.....

And send to: The Socialist Party
52 Clapham High Street
London SW4 7UN

Meetings

Manchester Day School

Saturday 23 April, 1-5 pm
Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, City Centre (off Albert Square)

Theme: 'World Poverty'

Speakers:
Adam Buick ('Third World Poverty and the Anti-capitalist Movement')
Paddy Shannon ('Can Socialism End World Poverty?').
Refreshments available.

LANCASTER

Public Meeting
Monday 4th April, 8pm.
WHAT WILL THE ABOLITION OF CAPITALISM DO TO THE ARTS?
The Gregson Centre, Moorgate, Lancaster.

WEST LONDON

Tuesday 19 April, 8pm
THE ELECTION: DON'T BE A MUG: VOTE FOR YOURSELF FOR A CHANGE.
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

NORWICH

Discussion Meeting
Saturday 30 April, 12 noon
Welcome. Questions and discussions for new visitors
1.00pm Meal, followed by assessment and discussion of items on recent Annual Conference Agenda.
The Conservatory, back room of The Rosary Tavern, Rosary Road, Norwich.

Manchester Branch talk

Monday 25 April, 8 pm
Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre
'What Capitalism Does to Your Food'

SWANSEA BRANCH

Monday 11 April. 7.30 pm.
"Election activity. Is it worth it?"
Unitarian Church, High St, Swansea (next to Argos).

LONDON DAY SCHOOL

Saturday 9 April. 11am to 5pm.
PRACTICAL SOCIALISM: COMMON OWNERSHIP

11.30am What do we mean by common ownership?

Speaker: Adam Buick

1.30 - 2.30pm Lunch Break

2.30pm How distribution could be organised without money.

Speaker: Bill Martin

Room 11. Friends House, Euston Rd (Side entrance), NW1

Nearest tubes: Euston, Euston Square

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles
The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



On tactical voting

Here is something else for all those bewildered and dispirited Labour supporters to blame on Blair and his government. In their glory days of 1997 and 2001 voting was a happily uncomplicated business, requiring them only to go to their local

polling station and plonk their cross against the name of their New Labour candidate, then go home congratulating themselves on participating in the drive to raise living standards, make everyone healthier and more secure, tackle global poverty and climate change.

But since then it has been borne in on the most starry-eyed Labourite that their party is not only unable to make good on its promises but has carried through other, unpromised and unwelcome, policies like cutting single parent benefit and hounding those on incapacity benefit, imposing student tuition fees, introducing the market into the NHS and other public services, taking part in the invasion of Iraq. All of this makes voting, for many a Labour supporter, a matter fraught with indecision. There has been an anguished debate from which has emerged - or rather re-emerged - the concept of tactical voting. This means voting for a second choice candidate - like a Liberal Democrat - in the hope that this will influence the Labour government to change its policies. This is a sight more complex than simply opting for their first choice candidate.

A jolt

The case for tactical voting has recently been stated by John Harris in his book *So Now Who Do We Vote For?*, in which a Labour ex-minister outlines his dilemma:

"And why don't we like Michael Howard? Partly because of his right wing record when he was home secretary. But we're more right wing than Michael Howard was. I'm not saying I want the Tories, but how bad would it be? The thing is, the Labour party needs a fright."

Harris

concludes that in Labour heartlands like Scotland, Wales, South Yorkshire and London "the Blairites need a jolt". He discusses some of the other parties - the SNP, Plaid Cymru, Green, Respect - which, if they amassed a considerable vote, would administer that jolt. This line of reasoning does not recognise the futility of voting for one unsatisfactory party in order to disturb another. After all it is not so long ago that voting Labour was sometimes used to give a Tory government a jolt. There must be another, more hopeful, more enduring method.

A rather



desperate-sounding parliamentary group under the name of "Impeach Blair" has campaigned to get Blair on trial for his part in the Iraq war and the deceptions he practised in that cause. The idea made very little progress, which is probably just as well because Blair may have been able to defend himself successfully on the grounds that he was only following precedent. For example there was Neville Chamberlain who in 1938 came back from Munich holding a piece of paper which, he claimed, was a guarantee of peace in our time, although even as he spoke this country - and quite a few others - were busily preparing for war. Then there was Anthony Eden, who in 1956 lied to the House of Commons when he denied that, in order to justify the attack on Suez, there had been a conspiracy between Israel, France and Britain to collude in the Israeli invasion of Egypt. Blair might point out that Eden, far from being prosecuted, was elevated into being Lord Avon. An acquittal would undoubtedly follow.

Standing in Sedgefield

As a result the group turned its attention to an idea dreamed up by Adam Price, a Plaid Cymru MP who is threateningly rumoured to be a

brainy maverick, to persuade someone to stand against Blair in his Sedgefield constituency. This person would need to be - rather like Martin Bell in Tatton in 1997 and Blair in his younger days - of impeccable character and antecedents and to be allowed a clear run by the other parties, to focus the anger against Blair effectively enough to unseat him. As we write nobody has been found to take this on. Sedgefield has been rock-solid Labour for over 90 years; the people there are apt to refer to Blair as "our Tony" (perhaps as the people of Tatton called Neil Hamilton "our Neil" before they threw him out in 1997) and in 2001 they gave him a majority close on 18,000.

It would be highly unusual, if not unprecedented, for a sitting prime minister to be opposed at an election by a single candidate. This did happen in 1945, when Winston Churchill's seat at Epping was contested by Alexander Hancock. The other parties had agreed not to stand in Epping, as a "mark of respect" for Churchill, but there were unacknowledged advantages for them in allowing "the man who won the war" to have a free ride to Westminster. However there were people who did not accept this; most prominent among them was William Douglas-Home whose brother, then Lord Dunglass, was Chamberlain's Parliamentary Private Secretary, closely involved in the Munich negotiations which effectively handed Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany. Douglas-Home was an ardent fan of Chamberlain and a bitter critic of Churchill; during his time in the Army in the war he fought three by-elections in opposition to the manner in which the war was being conducted. In September 1944 he refused an order to participate in the "mopping up" of the German army in Le Havre, on the grounds that this would result in heavy civilian casualties - which, when the attack came, did happen. Douglas-Home was court martialled, discharged from the Army and sentenced to a year's imprisonment with hard labour.

Contest in Epping

With this background Douglas-Home was an obvious possibility to ignore the party truce and stand against Churchill at Epping. He did at first intend to do this but then withdrew, which allowed Arthur Yates, another soldier (although not one who disobeyed orders; the Daily Mail affectionately described him as "an earnest, hardened and freckled young man") to stand in his stead. The Army flew Yates over from Austria for his nomination but he arrived too late, which left the field to Alexander Hancock, who got his name on the ballot papers as an Independent. Hancock was a local farmer; Churchill dismissed him as "somewhat crackpot" and it is true that he did have an unusual approach to politics.

To begin with he confessed not to have any desire to become an MP or to deny that to Churchill. When he was asked about his chances of defeating Churchill he shrugged "could anyone?" His principal objective was to publicise his "philosophical plan" under which "able bodied" people would do about an hour's compulsory work each day to provide the essentials of life and spend the rest of the time producing non-essentials. It might have occurred to the more reflective voters in Epping that the plans put forward by the other parties for trying to control British capitalism had little more than did Hancock's to commend them in terms of relevance and effectiveness. At all events over 10,000 of them voted for Hancock, or perhaps that was, in fact, tactically against Churchill, who survived with a majority of around 17,000.

Sadism and masochism

If someone is willing to offer themselves as another Alexander Hancock it will be in response to the widespread anger and disgust at Blair and the fact that his party's record in government has led to many ex-supporters feeling they are disenfranchised. Labour's election manipulators are already worried about the possibility that they will lose some seats by default because a lot of its supporters will be unable to summon up enough enthusiasm even to vote. To such people the prospect of a candidate taking on Blair one-to-one in his own territory has its attractions. If the unthinkable happened sadists might find pleasure in the downfall of a politician as plausible, dishonest and obsessive as Blair. But what then? Blair was after all once the great young hope of the Labour Party and of millions of people outside the party. What

reason is there to suppose that a successor would be any different, any more acceptable? Why should we believe

that another party, brought to power through tactical voting, would be any more successful? What hope is there that it would be useful to concentrate on one problem, one leader, one election? The working class persist in choosing between different versions of the same weary, discredited palliatives for capitalism's problems. This is not sadism; it is masochism and it will be a massive relief when it stops. ■

IVAN





Voice from the Back

What fun!

The newspapers are always reminding us that the US expeditions to Afghanistan and Iraq were carried out for humanitarian reasons, so it is good to be reminded from time to time of the mind-set of some of the combatants in those conflicts. "Actually it's quite fun to fight them, you know. It's a hell of a hoot. It's fun to shoot some people." Lieut. General James Mattis, who commanded U.S. Marine expeditions in Afghanistan and Iraq, in comments during a panel discussion for which he was later reprimanded." *Time* (14 February).

Mind the gap

The gap between the rhetoric of politicians and the economic realities of capitalism is a very large one. Here is a recent example. "As Tony Blair argued that a precautionary approach to greenhouse gas emission was vital to prevent environmental disaster, the European Commission threatened legal action because the UK wanted to raise the amount of carbon that industry is allowed to pump out under the European emission trading scheme. The government was accused of caving in to business led by the Confederation of British Industry" *The Observer* (20 February). They are messing up our world, how do you feel about that? Pass the inhaler we feel a little sick.

Useless toil

One of the most attractive features about a future socialist society is that it will do away with a lot of dangerous, dirty and nasty occupations. Think of a society without arms manufacture, armies,

policemen, jailers, prostitutes, bankers, insurance men and debt collectors. One of the multi-billion dollar industries that will disappear is the advertising and marketing con game. How big an industry is revealed in the following figures of some of the big global advertising spenders. "Procter & Gamble \$5.6 bn, Unilever \$3.54 bn, General Motors \$3.4 bn." *The Observer* (27 February). It is reckoned that \$60 billion will be spent this year telling you what kind of toothpaste to use, clothes to wear, food to eat and what kind of credit card is "in" this year. What a madhouse.

Nice for some

In January we reported that according to the International Labour Organisation 1.4 billion, the highest number ever, were living on less than \$2 a day and 550 million were living on less than \$1 a day. So it is only proper that we report the other side of the coin as reported by the 2005 Forbes dollar billionaire list. "Topping the list for the 11th year running is the Microsoft boss Bill Gates, worth £24.1 billion. The 19th annual list shows the world's rich getting ever richer, with a total of 691 billionaires. Lakshmi Mittal, the steel magnate who has backed the Labour Party, increased his net worth by £9.7 billion to £13 billion" *The Times* (11 March).



Lakshmi Mittal, with unnamed employee

Riding the tiger

Piers Morgan was made editor of the *News of the World* when he was only 28 years of age. Within two years he was editor of the *Daily Mirror*, a job he held for nine years until his "exclusive" of fake pictures of British guards abusing Iraqi prisoners was exposed. He has now published his memoirs *The Insider: The Private Diaries of a Scandalous Decade*. It is the usual mix of celebrity-spotting and anecdotes that such memoirs tend to be. Here is an extract from a book review that reveals the high-minded thinking of our leaders. "Before the 1997 general election Morgan suggested to Blair that he shouldn't forget his friends at the Labour-supporting *Daily Mirror* in his cosying up to Murdoch to win the "vote" of the *The Sun*. 'Piers, I had to court him', said Blair. 'It is better to be riding the tiger's back than let it rip your throat out. Look at what Murdoch did to Kinnock'" *The Times* (12 March).

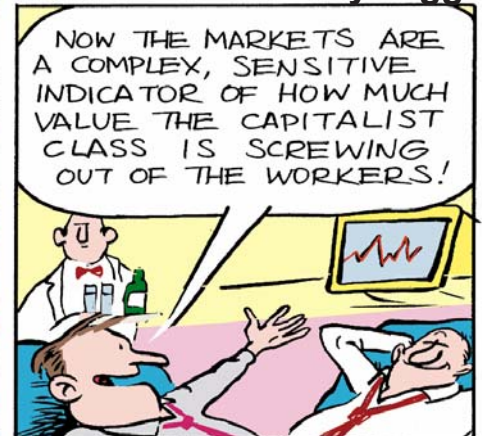
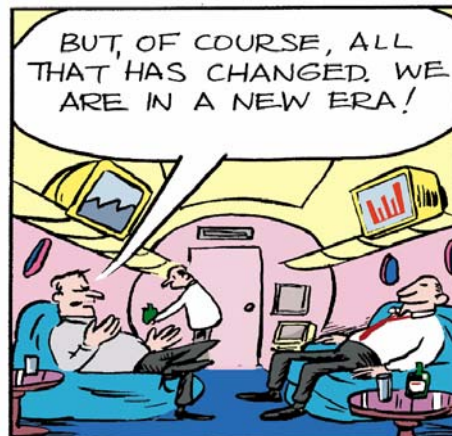
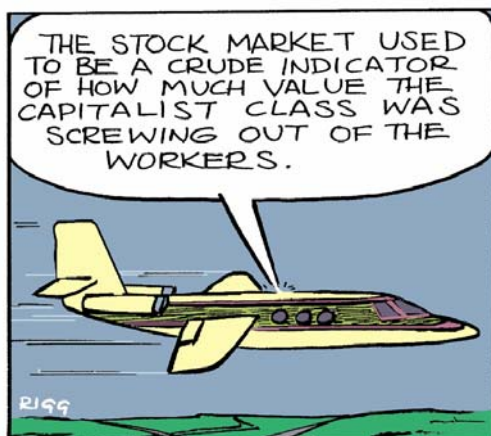


Piers the tiger

Read it and weep

Jeffrey D. Sachs, head of Columbia University's Earth Institute and special adviser to UNO chief Kofi Annan has just written a book called *The End of Poverty*. Being by a reformer who thinks that capitalism can solve the problem of world hunger, the book has limited value, but what cannot be denied is the mass of information that Sachs has gathered on the state of world hunger today. It makes for awful reading. "Currently more than 8 million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive." Every morning our newspapers could report "More than 20,000 people perished yesterday of extreme poverty." How? The poor die in hospital wards that lack drugs, in villages that lack anti-malarial bed nets, in homes that lack safe drinking water. They die namelessly, without public concern. Sadly such statistics rarely get written" *Time* (14 March).

Free lunch



by Rigg

ISSN 0037 8259

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Death of the Pope
The Warsaw Pact
2005 General Election
Profit System
Wilfred Owen
Profile on Callaghan

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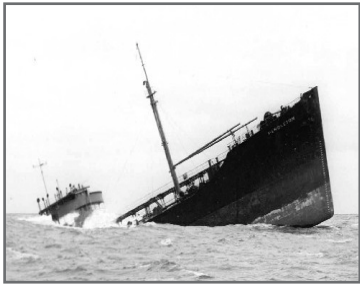
**The real
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Callaghan's ship of state: page 19

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“The myth of the 'Cold War' enabled each of the two capitalist superpowers to control its real enemy - its own working people - by intimidating it with news of the transgressions of the other”

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Warsaw Pact, page 8

What about the real issue?

By now you will perhaps have heard a fair bit from the mainstream candidates in this month's General Election. They will have waffled on about services, jobs, crime, and how things will improve, if only they are put in power.

They all talk about money - spend more, spend less, tax it, borrow it, lend it, find it - but they never talk about where it comes from. They never talk about the basic rules by which it is used. They just assume that money is being made, and that they can adapt their policies to the rules of the money-making game. That is, they assume capitalism.

They defend a society in which the majority of the population must sell their capacity to work to the tiny handful who own most of the wealth. They defend a society in which things can only happen if there is a profit to be made. In short, they subscribe to the law of no profit, no production.

One thing is certain, and perhaps you'll already be of this opinion. Whichever candidate or party will win brings about no significant changes to the way things are. And in between elections we have little or no say in the important decisions, the 'real issues' that concern us.

Politicians are fond of telling us that we must take responsibility for our own actions and that we must see to it that our world is a fit place for our children to grow up in. But how can we seriously do

anything about it when the real decisions are not in our hands? Because of the way things are organised at present, none of us are allowed to take part in the really important decisions that effect us - the ones about our schools, about health and housing, peace and pollution, and the distribution of wealth.

What the Socialist Party urges as the alternative to this insane set-up is a truly democratic society in which people take all of the decisions that effect them.

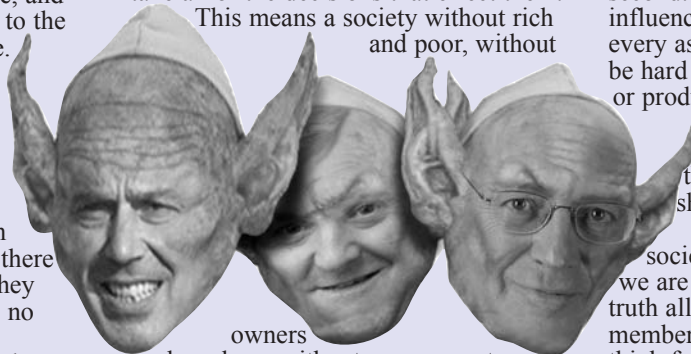
This means a society without rich and poor, without

borders and frontiers, an end to force and coercion, waste and want and war.

Today we have the technology, the resources and the know-how to satisfy everyone's needs. That fact is well established. However, we cannot utilise society's assets sensibly because of the profit-driven requirements of the market-system. In a society in which the fundamental need of production is profit, our needs will always come a poor second. The profit system exerts such an influence in society that it impinges upon every aspect of our lives, and you'd really be hard pressed to think of some service or product that is not balanced against

cost - something to muse on when you're waiting for the bus, the police or visiting the local shops.

You may consider that the society we urge sounds nice, but that we are demanding the impossible. In truth all we are asking is that you, as members of the waged and salaried class, think for yourselves, value yourselves and your fellows higher, expect more for your children and grandchildren. Is it not the case that our world would be a better place to live in if we had a real democratic say in the decision-making process and real democratic control over the means and instruments for producing and distributing the things we need to live in comfort? Is it not high time that we took back control of our destiny from the profit-mongers and the masters of war?



and workers, without governments and governed, a society without leaders or the led.

In such a society, people could cooperate voluntarily to run all of the world's natural and industrial resources in their own interests, freeing production from the artificial constraints of profit and establishing a system of society in which each person has free access to the benefits of civilisation. Socialist society would consequently mean the ending of buying, selling and exchange, an end to

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Nanotechnology: the end of Scarcity?

The Greek philosopher Democritus, doubtless toying with his tea, first imagined cutting up a piece of cake until he arrived at a fundamental piece he couldn't cut (Greek a-tom, uncut). Then, much later, Rutherford tried to cut it anyway. Then Richard Feynman wondered what would happen if, instead of cutting atoms, you simply stuck them together like Leggo. In theory, he mused, you could build anything out of anything. And then a futuristic science writer brought the idea to the public's attention with the 1986 classic *Engines of Creation* (now downloadable as a complete PDF from <http://www.foresight.org/EOC/index.html>). And so was born nanotechnology.

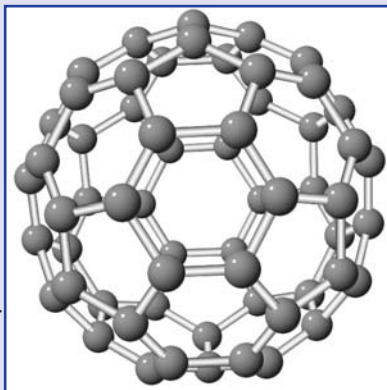
"Nanotechnology Technology that operates on the scale of a nanometre, which is a millionth of a millimetre. To give you some idea, your fingernails probably grew about six nanometres in the time it has just taken you to read this paragraph." *Independent on Sunday*, March 13, 2005

Five years ago few people had heard of it. But then Prince Charles, with his finger on the pulse as usual, announced his personal fears that nanotechnology might accidentally turn the world into a huge dead swamp of gunk. This idea of runaway replication (the 'grey-goo theory', reminiscent of Kurt

Vonnegut's 'ice-nine' in his 1963 novel *Cat's Cradle*) was first proposed, and then recently rejected by Drexler himself as alarmist (*New Scientist*, June 12, 04). However, it doesn't take much to start a scare, and the environmentalist lobby have already begun making demands for legislation over this 'Frankenstein' technology, and new laws are on the way (*New Scientist* Oct 9, 2004)

New laws, and the technology is not even in its infancy, it's still a growing foetus. But the worry is that nanoparticles are already cropping up unannounced in consumer products like suntan lotion before anybody's really sure they're good for us. Capitalism is not willing to wait, it wants profits now, any way it can. Nanoparticles are presently only good for filtering, so they go in face creams.

But this is nano at its most trivial. The real achievement is in construction. We already have nanotrees, nanotubes,



A Buckminsterfullerene molecule, or 'Bucky Ball'

nanobots and buckyballs, strange 60+ atom molecular cages harder than a diamond. Buckytube compounds are 5 times less dense than steel but 30 times stronger, while bonding them to polymers could lead to a new generation of superlight car and aircraft composites up to 20 times stronger. Drexler

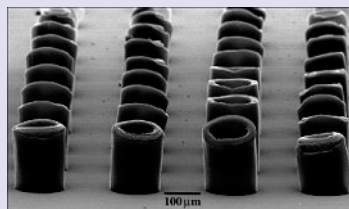
envisages such aircraft with engine trouble gently parachuting to earth instead of crashing. Meanwhile costs are plummeting. In 2002 nanotubes cost €300 per gram, while in 2004 it was €30 (*New Scientist* Sept 18, 04).

Even this is nothing but an hors d'oeuvre. The main course, and the cause of Charles Windsor's sleepless nights, is replication. If nanomachines can self-replicate, they could in theory eat the world if they got out of control. But they, thinks

Drexler, why would we design them to do that? What we want is constructive replication - houses, cars, machinery, clothes, even food - grown in vats, silently, unaided, without fuss and without waste. The ability to replicate any material means the end of material scarcity for the planet.

Drexler is well worth reading, even now. But in amongst his infectious enthusiasm there was a big hole waiting for the question that he didn't ask. What would capitalism do with this technology? Free food? Free houses? Free everything? Hardly! Markets would collapse, and power elites with them. Nanotechnology would instigate a social revolution whether anyone wanted it or not. So perhaps it's just as well that replicating nanobots are still a long way from losing their virginity.

'Nanotechnology: small science, big deal' is at the Science Museum, London SW7 (0870 870 4868) to 31 August.



Nanotubes

How would socialism deal with the impending energy crisis?

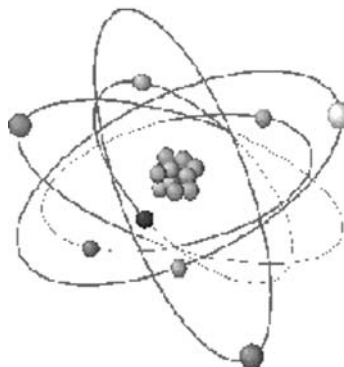
At present, if socialism had to guarantee an average western standard of living to everyone on the planet, global energy needs would approximately quadruple. Although there are many ways in which capitalism wastes huge amounts of energy, socialist society would still be looking for effective carbon-free sources, and one of these is, inevitably, the nuclear option. While the implications of this option under capitalism gives no cause for confidence, it may be that an advanced nuclear programme, uninfected by the profit motive, could be viable. Capitalism's problem, apart from the tendency to skimp safety and disposal costs, is the threat of uranium being enriched and used as a weapon. Consequently, two new ideas on the drawing board will probably not go any further, but in money and war-free socialism they might well find a new lease of life.

Nuclear Power to take away (from *New Scientist*)

Small sealed reactors that can be delivered to anywhere in the world are being developed by the US Department of Energy. The idea behind the small, sealed, autonomous reactor (SSTAR) is that conventional nuclear

stations produce about a gigawatt of electricity, making them unsuited for remote locations which have neither the technological infrastructure to refuel or maintain them of the national grid to distribute that much power.

"In a SSTAR the nuclear fuel, liquid lead coolant and a steam generator is sealed inside the housing, along with steam pipes ready to be hooked up to an external generator turbine. A version producing 100 megawatts would be 15 metres tall, 3 metres in diameter and weigh 500 tonnes. A 10-megawatt version is likely to weigh less than 200 tonnes." When the fuel is exhausted after 30 years, the unit would be collected for recycling.



To make it work, the uranium has to recycle itself into plutonium 239, effectively making the reactor a fast-breeder. In this circumstance, reliability is a crucial factor, and if any faults develop alerts can be sent over satellite radio channels to the D of E or to an international agency overseeing the reactors. Despite the 'forest of alarms' built into the unit, there is no real guarantee that a rogue state couldn't break in and steal the plutonium. The D of E hopes to have a working prototype by 2015. This column expects to see that ambition firmly spiked.

Red Snapper

Sound bites and unsound nibbles

 A moustachioed demagogue". *Labour MP Oona King's election team on George Galloway. Guardian, April 12th.*

 The tension, the atmosphere [in Israel] looks like the eve of the civil war." *Ariel Sharon on the current situation in Israel. Independent, 12th April*

 All my life I was defending Jews, now for the first time I'm taking steps to protect me from Jews." *Ariel Sharon again, Independent, April 12th*

 I love a fight...I love coming out to Tories' seats and roughing them up a bit. That is what elections are all about." *John Prescott, Guardian, March 19th*

 You can walk down the street and see who's working class and who's middle class. It's in the way we drive, the way we are, the way we dress. I am not getting back into whether I am middle class - clearly I am!" *John Prescott again, Guardian, March 19th*



Cooking the Books (1)

Islamic Bankers

One of the measures announced in Gordon Brown's pre-election budget was a concession to Islamic banks.

"Under Islamic law", explained *the Times* (17 March), "the receipt and payment of interest is forbidden, so Sharia products are structured differently. Islamic deposit accounts are operated on a profit-sharing arrangement, under which the bank invests customers' money in Sharia-compliant investments and then shares profits with customers".

This meant that the money received by depositors was taxed as a dividend. Gordon Brown's concession consists in treating it from now on, for tax purposes, as interest.

The Christian Church, too, once used to condemn interest. Or rather, it condemned usury since the word "interest" derives from the Mediaeval Latin word "interesse" which was one of the ways round the ban: "interesse" was the compensation that could be charged if the money lent was not repaid on time.

R. H. Tawney, in his book *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, explained that what was condemned

was "that which appears in modern economic text-books as 'pure interest' - interest as a fixed payment stipulated in advance for a loan of money or wares without risk to the lender . . . The essence of usury was that it was certain, and that, whether the borrower gained or lost, the usurer took his pound of flesh". This is exactly the position preached by backward Islamic clerics today, as is one of the get-out clauses: No man in mediaeval times, wrote Tawney, "may charge money for a loan. He may of course take the profits of partnership, provided that he takes the partner's risks".

It is on this basis that Islamic banks operate. They pay depositors a share in the profits made from investing the money deposited. But,

economically speaking, that is what the interest paid by non-Islamic banks to their depositors largely is anyway. Under capitalist conditions, "interest is simply a part of profit", as Marx showed in Volume III of *Capital* (the beginning of chapter 22). What else could be the source of the money to pay interest on investments than the surplus value produced in the profit-seeking section of the economy?

Islamic law is quite compatible with capitalism as it

does not condemn making profits, only sharing them in the form of fixed payments. It only objects to bondholders not shareholders.

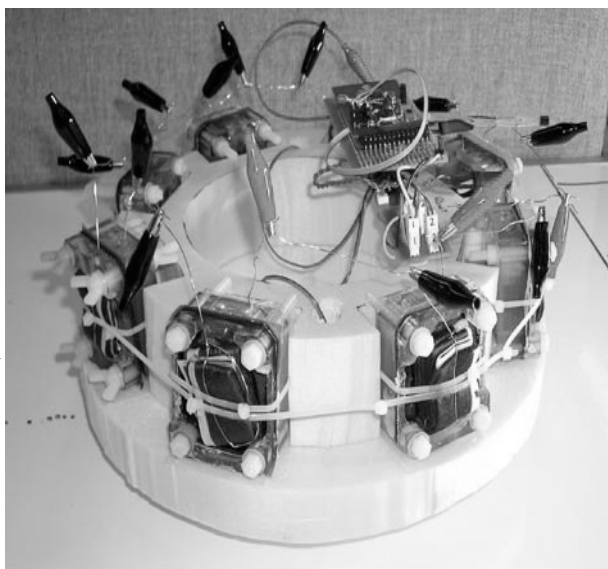


Peace be upon the profit...

Pathfinders Extra

Who would do the dirty work in socialism?

While conventional socialist views on cooperation and division of voluntary labour deal quite well with this question, there is no need for people to do the unpleasant work if a machine could do it instead, and a new development presents an intriguing possibility. Step forward - at 10 cms per hour - the insect-munching Ecobot. While there is nothing very new about robot technology, their dependence on a power supply means there always has to be a human somewhere in the system to feed it. But now a new



Ecobot in 'action'

generation of release and forget robots may be possible, powered by the common housefly, whose exoskeleton can be broken down into sugars used to produce electricity. Although Ecobot is at present astonishingly slow, and its method of trapping the flies (using large amounts of human dung as bait) decidedly unattractive, it can last an impressive five days on just eight large flies. Uses would include any type of routine maintenance, perhaps most appropriately in the sphere of agriculture, potentially releasing humans from many of the most tedious tasks.

*The Pope: 'a
conscientious defender
of the established order
of class privilege'*



The Death of John Paul II

The Pope's funeral drew the devout from around the world and deification now seems likely. But how much of a sinner was this potential saint? John Bisset investigates the dark side of Pope John Paul II

Being brought into a discussion on the death of Karol Wojtyla, alias Pope John Paul II, with a few elderly ladies while waiting for a bus, I commented that they would be wiser contemplating the hundreds of thousands he had sent to their deaths than mourning the passing of this enemy of their class. The ladies were visibly shocked, said I was out of order and that I shouldn't speak so irreverently of someone so holy. I tried to explain my remark, but they were having none of it.

Like countless millions in all countries, they had undoubtedly been caught up in that media-generated flood of sentiment that swept around the world when news of the Pope's death was broadcast; ready to defend the claims made by announcers on the TV news and in the 20-page papal death exclusives the press was churning out, that a living saint had died. One hundred and fifty world leaders were going to Rome to pay their respects to one of the "greatest men" who had lived, so I was in no position to pass sacrilegious judgement.

Days later the Pope's funeral was reported as the biggest in history. It had attracted 70 presidents, dozens of prime ministers, the leaders of fourteen religions, nine kings and queens and countless other dignitaries. Joining this farcical parade of the infamous were 4 million devout followers of the Catholic Church who had descended on Rome from all over the world.

The very fact that 150 world leaders, the heads of the executive body of world capitalism, were keen to attend this funeral must have suggested something. Karol Wojtyla was on their side and was clearly perceived as being a man who promoted their case. Had he been a critic of the profit system, had he publicly criticised the world's corporate elite and the

governments who defend their interests by any means, they'd have spat on his grave. As it turned out, this was like a big mafia don's funeral at which the gangster fraternity had turned out to pay their last respects to a fellow enemy of law and order.

John Paul's 28 years in the Vatican were certainly controversial. He lived through interesting times, as the saying goes, and like any Pope worth his salt involved himself in world political affairs when it was convenient to do so and made acquaintances with many world leaders, yet rebuked none of them.

He, for instance, referred to Chilean dictator, Pinochet, and his wife as "an exemplary Christian couple". When this enemy of Chilean democracy, who had killed tens of thousands of his opponents, was arrested and charged with crimes against humanity, the Pope waded in on his

"what was the Vatican if not undemocratic, unaccountable and bureaucratic?"

defence demanding his release, stating that as a Chilean leader at the time of his crimes he was entitled to immunity - a kind of papal infallibility for fascists.

Throughout South America, John Paul sided with the forces of reaction, supporting right wing elites and restraining any priest who saw themselves as on the side of the impoverished masses. The papal nuncios to the Chilean and Argentinean military dictatorships he promoted to cardinals. In Central America, he reproached members of the clergy who had sided with the Sandinistas and promoted to the status of cardinal one archbishop who



Far left: Josemaria Escriva. Deified by the Pope, he was 'The saviour of the Spanish church', according to Hitler. Left: papal collaboration with fascism

had opposed them.

Few news reports on the Pope's death did not refer to his time in the Vatican during the dying days of the Kremlin's empire. Some reporters were even bold enough to claim that it was his intervention in the Polish political scene in the 1980s that eventually led to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The rise of Solidarity and working class militancy in Poland at the beginning of the 1980s panicked governments around the world. The 'communists' of eastern Europe feared a growing threat to their rule, while the governments of the West saw the mobilisation of an angry section of society that could only inspire militancy in their own countries.

While John Paul wished to see the end of Stalinist rule, he was keen this should not be via violent revolution and, moreover, at the hands of left wing sections of Polish society, but by the right. Here he had the backing of the USA. In 1980 John Paul granted an audience to a group headed by Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and in the coming years the Vatican would find tens of millions of dollars to finance Solidarity's struggle.

Make no mistake; the Vatican was not openly supporting the demands of the workers in their struggle against an undemocratic, unaccountable Stalinist bureaucracy. After all, what was the Vatican if not undemocratic, unaccountable and bureaucratic? Instead, its aim was to contain the movement, to see it had the guidance of nationalistic and right-leaning Catholic ideologues and to ensure its confrontation with the Polish leadership did not get out of hand and win larger international support from workers.

Many news commentators referred to the 473 beatifications under the JP papacy, a figure that is twice the number of saints made in the previous 400 years. One can only assume that with more social problems facing humanity than at any time in its history the Pope thought we needed an increase in the number of saints to pray to for help in solving them.

However, among those beatified and elevated to the ranks of the saints by John Paul II was the anti-Semite Pope Pius IX and Pope Pius XII, the latter being the same Pius who collaborated with the fascist regimes in Spain, Italy and Germany. Pius XII ordered the Catholic Church in Nazi Germany to steer clear of political activity, to close its political parties and to stifle its newspapers. Hitler would refer to this Papal move as "a great achievement" and of enormous advantage in the "fight against international Jewry". Under Pius' watchful eye, the Catholic Church went on to collaborate in the "racial certification" of all Germans and

refused to openly condemn Hitler when it was known that millions were being sent to the extermination camps.

Also elevated to sainthood was Josemaria Escriva, the founder of the hierarchical and clandestine Opus Dei in Madrid in 1928, and described by Hitler as "the saviour of the Spanish church", along with Mother Theresa who, when questioned on how her opposition to contraception in Calcutta was leading to unnecessary infantile deaths, countered that even a child who breathed only a few hours meant another soul for heaven. For Mother Theresa, suffering was a blessing from the almighty, for it enabled carers to reveal their love for the afflicted.

One scandal the press tended to steer clear of - and one humiliation John Paul was keen to ride out on behalf of Catholicism - was the sexual abuse scandals concerning priests and Church officials. Since the 1950s, 4,450 catholic clergy in the US alone have been accused of molesting children. The allegations have persisted down the years in spite of a

"the Pope became just another reactionary agent of oppression, like all of his predecessors"

Vatican decree in the 1960s which threatened anyone exposing child sex abuse within the Church with excommunication. John Paul continued the cover-up, issuing an edict demanding Church secrecy in child abuse allegations. The Pope's ruling on the matter was felt to be so conclusive that one leader of a Spanish seminary persuaded his scholars that he had the Pope's blessing to masturbate them.

John Paul's complicity in attempting to conceal sexual exploitation in the American, Irish, Austrian and other Churches, and his undermining of the importance of the allegations once they had come to world attention, merely emphasized the Vatican's double standards on issues of sexual morality.

While covering up the excesses of a sexually frustrated clergy who found it impossible to adhere to the vow of chastity, John Paul was ever ready to pronounce papal verdicts on homosexuality, sex outside of marriage, divorce, abortion and the use of birth control.

In recent years, in spite of a growing Aids epidemic which now infects tens of millions in impoverished countries, the

Vatican withdrew its support from those organisations that distributed free condoms. The head of the Vatican's office on the family, Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, propagated the lie that the Aids virus can pass through microscopic holes in condoms, and John Paul referred to the use of condoms as a 'culture of death'. In El Salvador, after a long struggle by the Church, packets of condoms were printed with the warning that they did not protect users from the spread of HIV and, in Nigeria, the archbishop of Nairobi proclaimed that condoms actually caused Aids.

Undoubtedly, millions who looked to the Catholic Church for guidance, who declined the use of protection during sex, were handed a death sentence. Perhaps millions of women were forced, by fear of the flames of hell, to bring young families into a world of abject poverty and early death through disease and hunger.

Whilst many saw JP as a champion of democracy and human rights, a one-man Amnesty International as one commentator suggested in the press, the truth is he was a conscientious defender of the established order of western-style class privilege, even if he did once refer to elected governments as the spreaders of "nihilism". He might have lambasted as an atheistic dogma what many refer to as "socialism" (state capitalism) in the Encyclical Centesimus Annus, whether it existed in Eastern Europe or Central America, but this seems to be his only reason - "socialism" was associated with atheism and therefore was a serious challenge to rule from Rome.

More importantly, the Pope headed an organisation with 1.3 billion followers who were encouraged to put their trust in a god and to pray to this god to solve the major problems of the day, thus diminishing people's faith in their own ability to sort out their own problems and undermining the likelihood of workers uniting and organising with a common objective. Accordingly, the Pope became just another reactionary agent of oppression, like all of his predecessors. And the Vatican's reactionary credentials are nothing recent. Indeed, it has been part of the foundation of reaction since the start, whether it was urging the masses to obey the Caesars, supporting the feudal hierarchical order, opposing the Protestant reformation or siding with the capitalist class against the workers, determined always to stifle the anger of the oppressed with promises of reward in heaven for their sufferings if they struggle on uncomplainingly, and an eternity in the sulphurous pits of hell if they organised to better their lot. ■

JOHN BISSETT



1961 and construction of the Berlin Wall begins

The 50th Anniversary of the Warsaw Pact

● This month marks the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the Warsaw Pact, the political and military alliance of the so-called 'socialist' countries in Eastern Europe. Signed on 14 May 1955 it bound together in a 'defensive alliance' Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania. East Germany joined in 1956, while Albania started distancing itself from 1962 onward and withdrew altogether in 1968.

The Russian government claimed that the Warsaw Pact was established as a response to the incorporation of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1955. In practice, however, it acted as a faïade for maintaining political and military control over East European countries 'liberated' from German occupation and a cloak for intervention in the affairs of its 'allies' (in effect its satellites), as occurred in Hungary and Poland in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Norman Lowe points out that for many writing during the 'Cold War' era, NATO was "the West's self-defence against communist aggression" (*Mastering British History*, p. 529). But while there was great tension and antagonism after the war the notion that Russia was waiting for the opportunity to invade Western Europe, an

action that would have achieved nothing short of total self-annihilation, must be viewed with scepticism.

President Eisenhower, for example, consistently held the view that the Russia posed no military threat to Western Europe. Instead, he saw NATO's primary role as to 'harden' European people in their opposition to 'communism' and "to

"the alleged 'war' between the two power blocs was orchestrated to control public opinion"

corral its allies and to head off neutralism, as well as deter the Russians" (Frank Costigliola, *Kennedy's Quest for Victory*, p. 244). In 1999, the Guardian reviewed newly declassified British government documents including a 1968 Foreign Office joint intelligence committee analysis. Its summary of the analysis states: "Russia had no intention of launching a military attack on the West at the height of the Cold War and in stark contrast to what Western politicians and military leaders were saying in public about the 'Soviet threat'" (1 January 1999). But if the Russian military threat

didn't really exist what was the basis of the 'Cold War'?

An important pre-condition for the perpetuation of capitalist class dominance is the unconditional 'obedience' of ordinary working people. In a non-authoritarian society perhaps the most effective way of sustaining obedience is by inducing fear of a perceived external threat that intimidates ordinary people into giving unquestioning support to their governments in return for protection from the apparent threat. Western governments conceived the 'International Communist Conspiracy' and the 'Cold War' as elaborate fairy tales, grossly exaggerating the threat of Russian military intentions to instil fear and intimidate Western public opinion.

These fairy tales have their origins in the Russian Revolution of 1917 when the Bolsheviks seized power and established state capitalism masquerading as 'socialism.' This event made conflict between Russia and western capitalism inevitable and within months of this seizure of power fifteen countries invaded Russia in what was hailed as a heroic mission inspired by a desire to secure self-determination for the Russian people. But on examination the motive behind this invasion had little to do with altruism, being instead driven by pure self-interest epitomised in three principal concerns. Firstly, the revolution had rendered a vast area - in excess of 15 percent of the world's landmass - 'off-limits' to Western capitalist expansion. Second, the new Russian State represented a dangerous example of an alternative to free market capitalism that threatened to inspire people to engage in struggles to establish 'communism' in other countries. Thirdly, the new Russian regime practising state capitalism would



The division of Europe during the Cold War

inevitably challenge free market capitalism in future spheres of influence.

Free market capitalism

The United States emerged from the Second World War as most powerful nation in the history of the planet and set about shaping a world in which capitalism and particularly US capitalism could flourish unhindered. The US State Department and Council of Foreign Relations constructed an image of the post-war world that comprised the regions "strategically important for world control" to be subordinated to the needs of free market capitalism. Each region was assigned a role with emphasis placed on Middle Eastern oil and on the economically underdeveloped countries to be permanently assigned the role of a source of raw materials, cheap expendable labour and markets. Vital to this vision was that post-war reconstruction should install foreign governments willing to embrace the 'right' business philosophy; a requirement that brought Western capitalism into conflict with the state-controlled capitalism of Russia and its newly-conquered Eastern Europe territories.

An expanded Russian Empire represented an unacceptable challenge to western capitalism and its plan for hegemony. The annexation of Eastern European countries barred free access of capitalist powers to whole regions expected to provide raw materials, investment opportunities, markets and cheap labour in precisely the same way as the 1917 Russian Revolution had frustrated earlier intentions to exploit pre-revolutionary Russia itself. State capitalism was an unacceptable constraint on capitalism's free development, fostering an unwillingness to co-operate or complement capitalism in the established industrial countries. Its centralised 'command economy' was incompatible with western and particularly US plans to construct a global

model based on private investment and 'free markets' dominated by corporations. Free market capitalism prefers a stable, unrestricted world where countries are 'open' to the free movement of capital and conditions conducive to unfettered worker exploitation and the maximisation of profits.

The threat of 'communism'

The existence of a 'Soviet Bloc,' claiming to be the ideological antithesis of capitalism was an anathema to the capitalist West. The source of concern lay

not in Russian military strength, but rather the fear that working people might be seduced by the propaganda appeal of 'communism' and attempt to establish Russian-style state capitalism in other countries that would exclude Western capitalism and remove further territorial from their control. As US strategic planner George Kennan put it in October 1947: "It is not Russian military power that threatens us, it is Russian political power" (*Strategies of Containment*, pp. 356-57). The ideological underpinning for a perpetual conflict was expressed by the United States National Security Council in its resolution 68, which constructed a vision of a world divided into two diametrically opposing forces representing 'absolute evil' on the one side and 'absolute good' on the other. 'Communism,' it asserted, was unimaginably evil, intent on world domination and must be everywhere challenged to defend the 'free world'. The US was given responsibility for leading this struggle, thereby granting itself the absolute right to defend or advance the interests of free market capitalism anywhere in the world under the pretext that any intervention would be another phase in the struggle to prevent the 'cancerous spread of communism.'

The ultimate objective of western governments was to force Russia and its satellites to return to their economically underdeveloped status, leaving vast new territories, raw material and cheap labour ripe for exploitation. But until this could be achieved the struggle for economic domination would continue in the undeveloped countries and the need to combat the evil of 'communism' would serve as a justification for action against any movement that might gain control over large masses of people, as happened in Vietnam. Such movements are dangerous to western capitalism if they are indicative of a preference for capitalist development independent of western control.

Limiting western aggression

Russia also represented one further challenge to free market capitalism. As well as excluding the 'free market' from its territories, Russia, like its western counterparts, seized every opportunity to exploit potential targets regularly using Warsaw Pact countries to offer support to targets of US subversion. These Russian ventures imposed unacceptable limits on Western aspirations in undeveloped countries, attracting widespread condemnation from Western politicians and media and excellent propaganda to sway public opinion against 'communism' and to reinforce the belief that US 'protection' was necessary to combat the Russian menace.

Essentially, the 'Cold War,' of which the Warsaw Pact and NATO were the visible symbols, set the parameters on a system of joint global management. The myth of the 'Cold War' enabled each of the two capitalist superpowers to control its real enemy - its own working people - by intimidating it with news of the transgressions of the other and as a justification for repression in its own sphere of control. But beneath the ideological rhetoric there was also a tacit understanding that each should be left to control its own sphere of influence. So while free market capitalism led by the United States would wage war and expand into what became known as the 'Third World', the Russians would maintain control over its East European satellites. This accounts for the West's refusal to assist the people of Hungary and Poland in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and explains why the Russians made no great effort to aid Vietnam or to assist the emerging nationalist groups that challenged US domination in Latin America. Despite the rhetoric, the alleged 'war' between the two power blocs was theatre, orchestrated to control public opinion.

Though the reasons for the final collapse of the Russia are complex, it was evident that by 1980 internal problems and economic stagnation were heightening and control over the Eastern European countries was rapidly dwindling. When the rotten edifice of Russian authoritarianism started collapsing in Eastern Europe in 1989 the façade of the Warsaw Pact shattered and officially dissolved in Prague on 1 July 1991.

The 'Cold War' ended in a perhaps inevitable victory of free market capitalism over state controlled capitalism. But while the 'Cold War' ceased to be a valid pretext, Western capitalism has been quick to discover new pretexts, of which the 'war on terror' is simply the latest, for a continuation of policies that are nothing more than an expression of its institutional needs. So though the justifications have changed the real struggle, driven by capitalist class interest, to secure the free movement of capital and unrestricted access to markets and raw materials continues unabated with working people everywhere the undisputed victims.

STEVE TROTT

VOTE EFFECTIVE - VOTE ALTERNATIVE

 In May 2005, this is the most important general election ever. Or was that in 2001? Or in 1997? Or 1987? The big political parties want to convince us about this because we may then be persuaded to vote for one or other of them, under the impression that by choosing between them we are making a difference to this social system. Vote for this party and our future is secure; vote for the other party and we put everything at risk. Here, for example, is Neil Kinnock in 1987:

"Every election is a time of decision. But this General Election ... faces the British people with choices more sharp than at any time in the past fifty years".

To which the "British people" sharply responded by emphatically rejecting Kinnock and his party.

Here is John Major in 1997:

"British people now have the

opportunity of a prosperous future. But that prosperity cannot be taken for granted... If we relax for one moment, our hard won success will slip away again".

By "relaxing" Major meant voting for the Labour Party, which was what the "British people" did, ensuring that Major himself slipped away into well-merited obscurity.

Finally, here is Blair in 2001:

"This general election is in many ways even more important than

the last... Now is the chance to build the future properly..."

Blair did not say why, after four years of Labour government, the future had still not been built "properly" but he obviously did not need to elaborate in that way because the electorate returned his party to power by a hefty margin. So how are things now, after the threats and the promises? Whether in gratitude or fear, the workers

will vote for capitalism again with the only uncertainty the pattern of their voting.

Blair and Howard

One factor which is likely to affect that pattern is the developing awareness that there is no significant difference between the Labour Party and the Tories. Because of this, solid Labour supporters who helped elect Blair in 1997 and 2001 now feel themselves disfranchised. Another factor is that, like so many of his predecessors, Blair has been exposed as a trickster and a liar, so that he is no longer the easeful vote harvester he once was.

On the other side, Michael Howard is looking more and more like a man who is desperately trying to throw off his past; for example wearing his customary oily smirk he urged us on TV to "Let the sunshine break through the clouds of disappointment we all feel". The problem for Howard is that his time as a Tory minister is not remembered for being at all sunny. As Home Secretary he was in the habit of using his time at the rostrum in Tory conferences to excite the ugliest of prejudices - and not just about crime. In this election, as Tory leader he has tried to exploit racist neuroses about immigration by promising to establish a Border Control Police, forgetting the time in the 1990s when, according to the Public and Commercial Services Union, he

Our Candidate's Manifesto

As is our usual policy, we are standing one token candidate in the general election, in the Vauxhall constituency in South London, to challenge all the pro-capitalist parties and ensure that the voice of socialism is not entirely lost amidst the recriminations of the professional politicians about how to run capitalism.

The Socialist Party is contesting this election as a part of our campaign to establish a new system of society: one based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

That is our sole object.

By common ownership we don't mean that everyone should have to share a toothbrush, but that in a society built upon our mutual effort, we should all benefit and have a say in how it is run.

We currently live in a system of society based on a tiny number of people owning the productive wealth of our world, organised and run by a handful of bosses for their benefit. Their profits come first, our needs come second.

In Vauxhall nearly half of all workers are employed in administering business as compared with only a quarter in social services and looking after ourselves (derived from 2001 Census).

It seems we're so busy taking care of business that we don't have time to take care of ourselves.

Because of this we have endless problems of poverty, poor services and all the issues politicians love to spend time telling you they can solve, if only given the chance.

We don't believe any politician can solve these problems, as long as the flawed basis of our society remains intact. In fact, we believe only you and your fellow workers can solve these problems.

We believe that it will take a revolution in how we organise our lives, a fundamental change. We want to see a society based on the fact that you know how to run your lives, know your needs and have the skills and capacity to organise with your fellows to satisfy them.

You know yourselves and your lives better than a handful of bosses ever can. With democratic control of production we can ensure that looking after our communities becomes a priority, rather than something we do in our spare time.

We all share fundamental needs, for food, clothing, housing and culture, and we have the capacity to ensure access to these for all, without exception.

If you agree with this aim, then we ask you to get in touch with us, get involved and join in our campaign to bring about this change in society. Together, we have the capacity to run our world for ourselves. We need to build a movement to effect that change, by organising deliberately to take control of the political offices which rule our lives, and bring them into our collective democratic control. Our candidate makes no promises, offers no pat solutions, only to be the means by which you can remake society for the common good.

Danny Lambert The Socialist Party Candidate

The campaign office is our Head Office at 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN. This will be open every day and evening during the election period. So, if you want to help call in (the nearest tube station is Clapham North) or phone 0207 622 3811 or email spgb@worldsocialism.org

If you don't live in Vauxhall and want to show that you reject the policies of the profit system and understand and want the real socialist alternative, the way to do so is to write "SOCIALISM" across your ballot paper.

The Socialist Party is also standing a candidate in the Deneside ward in the Durham County Council elections also being held on 5 May. Details and offers of help to: Steve Colborn, 46 Ivy Avenue, Seaham, SR7 8NF.



The economy

However those who voted in the Blair governments have no more cause for satisfaction. There have been Labour Home Secretaries who have exceeded Howard in their punitive response to those crimes which capitalism places outside the law. A succession of Criminal Justice Acts has tightened the screw on offenders while nourishing the ambition of those Home Secretaries to become party leader. Detention - imprisonment - without trial, or even being told the reasons for being in prison, has become established. Blair's sound bite about being tough on crime and on the causes of crime has been discredited as the causes of crime - poverty, stress, alienation, social disability - remain.

actually hampered immigration controls by slapping on a recruitment freeze. Howard has told a heart-wrenching story about his mother-in-law dying of an infection she picked up as a hospital patient but during the last Conservative governments all was not well with hospitals for there was a shortage of nurses and doctors and waiting lists - for anyone unable to afford anything better - were a problem then as they are now. Schools also suffered, being cut back on their teachers, books and other equipment. The last Tory government, under John Major, descended into such chaos that when they were defeated in 1997 it was almost an act of mercy by the voters.

Blair's claims that under his government the British economy has been in controlled health have been exposed by the collapse of the Rover car company. The company was losing millions of pounds and cars are not manufactured in order to provide the workers with a wage stable enough for them to make assumptions about their future. The bottom line - to use an irritating, although apposite, phrase - is that if there is no profit there is no employment, even if that mean thousands of workers being transferred from a just

tolerable level of poverty to one of abject degradation. That is the basis on which capitalism organises its wealth production and no government can affect it.

Alternative

Blair's popularity has been seriously eroded by the exposure of his lies over the causes of the war in Iraq. But this was by no means the only example of a politician lying because none of them could readily admit to their impotence to control the events of capitalism. For them the only way out is through deception, at times to the extent that they begin to believe their own lies - as, it is rumoured, is the case with Blair. What this amounts to is that there is a basic unity among the parties which stand for the continuance of capitalism, which can only be solidified by every vote for those parties. But there is no need to waste the vote in that way for we have the means of basically changing society so as to eliminate the problems which now disfigure it. The Socialist Party is standing alone as a party which aims at the capture of political power by the working class, to abolish capitalism and replace it with a society based on common ownership of wealth production and distribution and making that wealth freely available to everyone. That is Socialism - the only alternative to capitalism and its political parties.

IVAN

The Profit System

Very few people would deny that the present state of the world leaves a lot to be desired. Humanity staggers from one crisis to the next - from war to famine to slumps to repression . . .

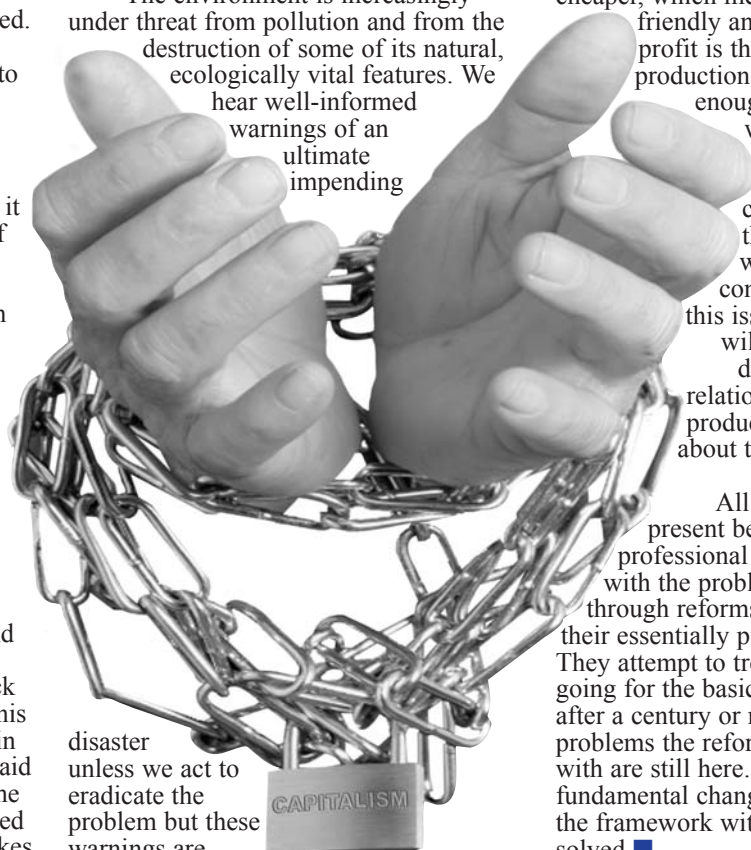
Capitalism has developed a huge productive capability but its social organisation and relationships cause extremely serious problems and render it incapable of meeting the basic needs of its people.

A vast amount of the world's resources is expended in the production of weapons of war, from bullets and bayonets to nuclear and chemical weapons. Alongside these weapons are the armed forces which every state organises, clothes, feeds, trains and deploys. This is a massive waste of human effort; it is all intended to be destructive and none of it to create anything useful to human beings.

In a world which could produce more than enough to feed and care for its population millions are homeless and tens of millions die each year because they don't have enough to eat or for lack of proper medical treatment. None of this is necessary. It happens while farmers in Europe and North America are being paid to take land out of cultivation; from time to time even food that has been produced is destroyed or allowed to rot. This makes sense to the profit motive; in terms of

human interests it is wildly insane.

The environment is increasingly under threat from pollution and from the destruction of some of its natural, ecologically vital features. We hear well-informed warnings of an ultimate impending



disaster unless we act to eradicate the problem but these warnings are always met with the objection that to save

the environment can be a costly, profit-damaging business. Yet it is not necessary for industry and agriculture to pour out noxious effluents into the air, the earth, the rivers and the seas. They do this today because pollution is seen as being cheaper, which means more profit-friendly and to a society where profit is the dominant motive for production that is justification enough to override human welfare.

These are a few examples of how capitalism works against the interests of the world's people. In contrast, as the articles in this issue explain, socialism will have fundamentally different social relationships, motives for production and concepts about the interests and security of human beings.

All the programmes at present being advanced by the professional politicians for dealing with the problems of capitalism through reforms must fail because of their essentially piecemeal approach. They attempt to treat symptoms instead of going for the basic cause. That is why, after a century or more of reformism the problems the reformists claim to deal with are still here. A far more radical, fundamental change is needed to create the framework within which they can be solved. ■

Wilfred Owen - war poet, icon . . .visionary?



That turbulent decade, the 1960s, with its "Peace Movement" - CND, Aldermaston Marches, anti-Vietnam protests and all that - witnessed also the rediscovery of the works of World War I poet Wilfred Owen and his popular elevation to something of a "moral exemplar" and "voice for his generation"; a process further enhanced by composer Benjamin Britten's inclusion of several of his poems in the opera *War Requiem*. A whole eclectic range of groupings have, often on the flimsiest of pretexts, claimed him as their own; from pacifists, feminists, Christians to so-called socialists, and whilst politically he did "tend to take the liberal side of the question", he was no pacifist and certainly no socialist, "so-called" or otherwise.

Owen was one of a cluster of poets - Sassoon, Graves, Brooke and others - who endeavoured to view war from the perspective of the common soldier, portraying it in all its stark inglorious horror; a genre miles (well, easily half a league) away from the triumphal propagandist outpourings of late-Victorians Arnold, Newbolt and Tennyson. Whilst they, from distant drawing-room safety, could narrate glowing sagas of heroic charges, famous victories and sabres clashing, Owen's poetic tapestry was an altogether more realistic one,

interwoven and spattered with images of carnage and suffering. Infantrymen "shiver and cringe in holes", "curse through sludge", "bleed and spew", lose limbs, eyesight, sanity. The air resounds to "the monstrous anger of guns", the wailings of "shell on frantic shell", "stuttering rifle fire" and "stinks sour" of mud, of men - of corpses.

It is perhaps not widely known that Owen spent little actual time on the Front

"Owen could only see the War's solution in terms both abstract and impracticable, if not downright silly"

Line - a mere 30 days between January and April 1917, from which period most of his poems emanate, followed by a further month through October into November 1918. Moreover, although he did suffer all the tribulations of combat and did indeed pay the ultimate price, he was spared the month on month, year on year wet, freezing, verminous conditions and the prolonged tedium, intimidation and gnawing uncertainty endured by so many. Whilst he could with every justification write, "Those 50 hours were

the agony of my happy life" and, "Those last 4 days I've suffered Seventh Hell", his overall war

experience was by no means typical.

The son of a minor railway official, Owen was born in Oswestry, Shropshire in 1893 and if money was sufficiently tight to preclude university education, his upbringing was not a deprived one. Displaying some small academic talent, Owen pursued careers initially as pupil-teacher then parish assistant. Already, inspired by Keats, he was dabbling in verse.

The outbreak of World War 1 found him eking out an existence as an English tutor in Bordeaux, France whence he displayed not the slightest inclination to "answer his Country's call". Eventually however, feeling "traitorously idle" and galvanised by the views of his French literary mentor, Laurent Tailhade, he crossed the Channel in October 1915 and enlisted as a private in the Artists' Rifles, "to defend his language and culture". Thereafter, through sheer graft, "Little Owen", a frail diminutive figure and "perceptively provincial", secured a commission as Second Lieutenant in the Manchester Regiment and in January 1917 arrived in the trenches "to fight Fritz whom," he insisted, "he did not hate".

Then ensued intermittent periods of ferocious action until in April, already

traumatised by a recent gassing incident later featured in verse, Owen was blown up, rendered temporarily unconscious and subsequently diagnosed as suffering from "shellshock".

By 1917, a more scientific attitude had been adopted towards this phenomenon. The Somme offensive the previous year had yielded 30,000 such cases and as they clearly couldn't all be "degenerates" or "cowards", a new term, "Neurasthenia", had come into vogue. The importance of immediate therapy being recognised, this was provided in nearby field hospitals; not it should be noted, from any humanitarian considerations, but solely to enable the less serious cases, around two thirds overall, to be speedily "cured" and returned to the trenches for another dose of the same.

Owen, as a more severe case, was invalided home, hospitalised in Edinburgh and set about creating the poems that would eventually secure his reputation. In *Dulce et Decorum Est*, an ironic comment on the famous line by the Latin poet Horace, that it is "pleasant and honourable to die for one's country", Owen recounted the plight of an unmasked Tommy caught in a mustard gas attack, concluding:

"In all my dreams before my helpless sight

He plunges at me guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dream you too could pace

Behind the wagon that we flung him in,

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,

His hanging face like a devil's sick of sin;

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood

Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,

Bitter as the cud

Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,

My friend you would not tell with such zest

To children ardent for some desperate glory,

The old Lie: *Dulce et Decorum est Pro patria mori.*"

The "old Lie"? During his prolonged convalescence, Owen encountered various viewpoints, dissenting and otherwise, on the conduct of the War but there is no evidence that he ever developed any understanding of the underlying reasons for its having been waged in the first place. Nevertheless, however inadvertently, Owen has, as it were, "landed a direct hit". It does require a lie; a veritable pack of them in fact, to persuade the artisans, the farmhands, the clerks in one country that their own best interests are suddenly and mysteriously at variance with those of their direct counterparts in another and to spontaneously quit their respective workplaces, dole-queues, semis and slums to participate in the act of mutual slaughter that is war. Always "freedom", "democracy", "ways of life", "national pride" are at stake and,

remarkably, "God" is ever on their side. Specific to the 1914 affair, German "militarism" had to be rebuffed and "plucky little Belgium" supported.

The truth is decidedly less exotic. Wars are always and only waged for entirely commercial reasons - access to raw materials, markets, trade routes and strategic positions from which to defend them all. In short, to consolidate existing profits and aspire to the accumulation of others. The present globally-dominant economic system, capitalism, features within each country, the ownership of the means of wealth - the land, factories etc. - by a tiny parasite minority, from which it follows therefore that any profits will accrue only to that minority. The overwhelming non-owning majority; those who do the fighting and the dying, effectively get nothing. Would any worker, apprised of this, raise even a peashooter to their lips? Hence the need for the "old lie".

Germany did not become unified until the 1870s, by which time the bulk of the world's exploitable resources had been colonised by longer-established nation states like Britain and France. To develop and expand, therefore, required attempting to "muscle in on the action", precisely in the way that criminal organisations have long engaged in feuds over bootlegging, gambling and drug-trafficking rights. World War I was only ever a sordid large-scale turf war between rival "families" within capitalism's mafia - although by the time the politicians, the media, the clergy and the educationalists had spun their lies, old and new, very few people saw it as such.

Ignorant of the real causes of the War, Owen could only see its solution in terms both abstract and impracticable, if



St. Souplet, the place of Owen's death

not downright silly. In this he was not alone. Some held that the war was a "natural tragedy" to which the only responses could be of sorrow and compassion; others that it represented merely the periodic erupting of some innate human predisposition towards aggression. Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells believed the war would "exhaust itself", enabling wise and devoted people (like themselves, presumably), to step in and "rebuild Society". Owen himself considered that when the war machinery had "choked itself to a halt", then "art" and "beauty" could be deployed to "help refresh the human spirit".

Accordingly, he hoped to avoid being returned to the Front, but his hopes were not to be realised. In due course, he was deemed "cured" and returned to France nicely in time to participate in the final decisive attack on and through the

Hindenberg Line. For bravery under fire he was awarded the Military Cross but as this particular incident involved him also single-handedly exterminating numerous "Fritzes", the actual text of his citation tends not to be quoted by those who would portray him as the "Poet of Pity". He himself perished at St. Souplet just one week prior to that supreme exercise in pretentious cant - "The eleventh hour of the eleventh day, etc., etc." - that was the signing of the Armistice.

The September 1914 issue of the *Socialist Standard*, observing the entirely "business" nature of the war embarked upon, both extended the hand of friendship to the workers of all countries and declared that there was nothing at stake "to justify the shedding of a single drop of working class blood". This uniquely-principled stance, maintained throughout, is one of which socialists can feel immensely proud. More importantly, a solution, concrete, practicable and eminently sensible, was offered. Since wars arise solely from conflicts of interest between rival groupings of capitalists, and are merely an extension, a more turbulent or intense phase of this ongoing struggle, then it follows that their eradication lies with the universal replacement of private ownership with common ownership. If the world's natural resources and means of producing wealth were the property of Humanity at large, what possible reason for conflict would, or could, remain?

Wilfred Owen's poetic voice was an exceptional and developing one, prematurely stilled. Who knows to what heights it might have soared? His poems depict their subject matter in ways that are once beautiful and repulsive and are, albeit unintentionally, a damning indictment of

class-divided society. Furthermore, they serve as a dire warning to any testosterone-fuelled youth "ardent for some desperate glory", that the net result of "taking the shilling" might just be the sudden and catastrophic loss of his testosterone-producing faculties.

As much, however, as his poems deserve to be read, to be appreciated, to be cherished, they do merely observe; they neither investigate nor solve. This requires the altogether more prosaic process of examining and understanding the underlying reasons for war. ■

ANDREW ARMITAGE

When Johnny Comes Marching Home

In many movies after the second world war there was a scene where the local boys came home to their little US town. The band played, hats were thrown in the air and the old frosty school mar'm could be seen to shed a secret tear.

It is a beautiful fantasy and if you add Van Johnson, Elizabeth Taylor and whoever happens to be the present teen dream to the scene it could play for ever today. There is only one snag, it is not true.

Some of the homeless people that try to beg money from you on Waterloo Bridge fought in the Falklands. Some that will try to tap you in the future fought in Afghanistan or Iraq.

From North America we read in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (19 February): "Since Vietnam, we've learned that there's on average a 12 year delay between returning from war and begging on the streets," Linda Boone of the Washington-based National Coalition for Homeless Veterans told me. She said governments should start getting ready for vast numbers of beggars and vagrants, all created by war. It is a well-known phenomenon, albeit one that governments have never properly acknowledged: After any war ends, the number of people living on the streets increases dramatically.' Does this mean that the Elizabeth Taylor and Van Johnson characters ended up sleeping rough, surely not!

From the same article we learn that "in Britain, the government has estimated that a quarter of the people 'sleeping rough' - on the streets - are military veterans. If you want to find someone who fought in the Falklands war, you'd best look in the tunnels beneath Waterloo Bridge."

The facts seem obvious to us - Johnny, stay at home and read your *Socialist Standard*. ■

RD

Limping home: a scene from the American Civil War film 'Shenandoah'



I'll Do It!

This is the Year of the Rooster, but also the Year of the Volunteer - you may have seen the TV ads for the website www.yearofthevolunteer.org. This is a government-run scheme, aimed at "encouraging active citizenship", but if we leave aside the government involvement, the whole volunteering set-up is both interesting and positive from a socialist viewpoint.

Some people volunteer because they believe or hope that it will be useful for their careers, but the vast majority do so because they see themselves as genuinely contributing to the well-being of their fellow humans. Voluntary activities include almost everything from helping people to make phone calls or fill in forms, teaching English or the use of computers, helping blind people get to appointments, befriending and supporting those with HIV, working for St John's



Ambulance or the Samaritans, counselling people with all sorts of problems, even working as a Special Constable. And all this is done unpaid, in the volunteers' own time,

often in addition to paid employment, and with no reward other than the satisfaction of helping.

In the light of this, how can anyone object to socialism on the grounds that in a society of free access nobody would wish to work? If people's consumption is not dependent on their work, the argument goes, why would someone want to work at all? One answer, as we have seen, is that even under capitalism people work voluntarily, probably not even regarding what they do as work, as it is not employment. This is not because they are saints or angels but because they do not want to see others suffering or in difficulties. And helping others means helping yourself too. Age Concern carried out a survey of elderly volunteers, which found:

"Volunteering benefits older volunteers in many ways, including making new friends, gaining self confidence, losing weight and living healthier lives.

"More than half (51%) of the over 65s who took part in Age Concern's report said volunteering improved their health and fitness and 62% said volunteering helped reduce stress" (From the above website).

So there you have it: even in a society of pressure and alienation voluntary work can be good for you. Just think of the pleasure of work in a world where there are no bosses, no dangerous workplaces and no production of useless rubbish. ■

PB

Fifty Years Ago

The First of May

"Then turn, and be not alarm'd O Libertad
-turn your undying face,
To where the future, greater than
all the past,
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you."
WALT WHITMAN

It is sixty-five years since half a million people poured through London, "an interminable array with multitudinous banners," on the first International May Day. No celebration, no insubstantial pageant this: column upon threadbare column they came, signifying and expressing labour's strength and labour's aspirations, with an eight-hour day as their rallying call. For sixty-five years it has continued, but the columns are small now. And the eight-hour day? They have it and, so generous is life to the working class, work overtime.

May Day is workers' day, the day of our class. However hollow the cries and futile the demonstrations, it remains the anniversary of protest, a continual reminder of exploitation and subjection. "Class" is the reason and the theme of May Day - class in its fullest, truest sense. The working class is not the labourers or the artisans or the machine-minders: it is all people to whom wages are life. The working class is international: so is its cause. Among the cries and chants and slogans of May Day, only one has meaning: "Workers of all countries unite!"

Class consciousness was never more needed than now. Sixty-five years have seen war, dereliction, fear and disaster; today mankind is under a shadow without precedent. The working people of the world have it in their hands to end poverty, fear, hatred and war. Nationalism is not their interest but their rulers'; submission is taught, not conceived. That is where the tragedy of the May Day processions lies. The hundreds of thousands who paraded their rights in 1890 lined the streets again seven years later, still threadbare, still of one mind - to cheer and wave streamers for their Queen.

To the Socialist, class-consciousness is the breaking-down of all barriers to understanding. Without it, militancy means nothing. The conflict between the classes is more than a struggle for each to gain from the other: it is the division which reaches across all others. The class-conscious working man knows where he stands in society. His interests are opposed at every point to those of the capitalist class; his cause can only be the cause of revolution for the abolishing of classes. Without that understanding, militancy can mean little. It is not mere preamble that the Socialist Party's principles open by stating the class division in capitalism: it is the all-important basis from which the rest must follow.

(Front page article by R. Coster, *Socialist Standard*, May 1955)



Socialist Standard May 2005



Cooking the Books (2)

Britain's bonanza farms

On 22 March the government published a list of firms and individuals in England receiving subsidies under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy in 2003 and 2004. The figures showed, said *the Times* (23 March), that:

"The biggest landowners, including members of the Royal Family, a clutch of dukes, and agri-food companies, are able to pick up hefty amounts of cash under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)".

The CAP is based on guaranteeing farmers a given price for their products. If market prices fall below the guaranteed price then farmers are paid a subsidy to compensate for the shortfall. The aim was to ensure an adequate and stable internal supply of food and other agricultural products, and involved levying tariffs on imports. In this it was successful, too successful in fact as farmers ended up producing "too much" so that, as this meant that market prices fell, the amount that had to be spent on subsidies increased. Non-agricultural sections of the

capitalist class - and EU countries like Britain with a comparatively small agricultural sector - protested and called for the CAP to be reformed.

One step in this direction was the "set-aside" scheme, introduced as from 1993, under which farmers are paid not to grow food. Cutting back production serves to bolster prices, and so the profits that farmers make, resulting in a reduction in the total subsidy bill (the cost of paying farmers not to grow food being less than the cost of making up the difference between the market and the guaranteed price).

The website of the lobby group UK Agriculture (www.ukagriculture.com) describes how set-aside works:

"Set-aside is a term for land that farmers are not allowed to use for any agricultural purpose. It was introduced by the EEC in 1992 as part of a package of reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy to prevent over production of food crops. It applies only to farmers growing crops.

In the first year of the scheme farmers had to set-aside a minimum of 15% of their cropped farmland for the harvest year of 1993. By the year 2000 the figure had dropped to 10% of cropped land but the amount changes each year according to EEC requirements.

In 1999 there were approximately

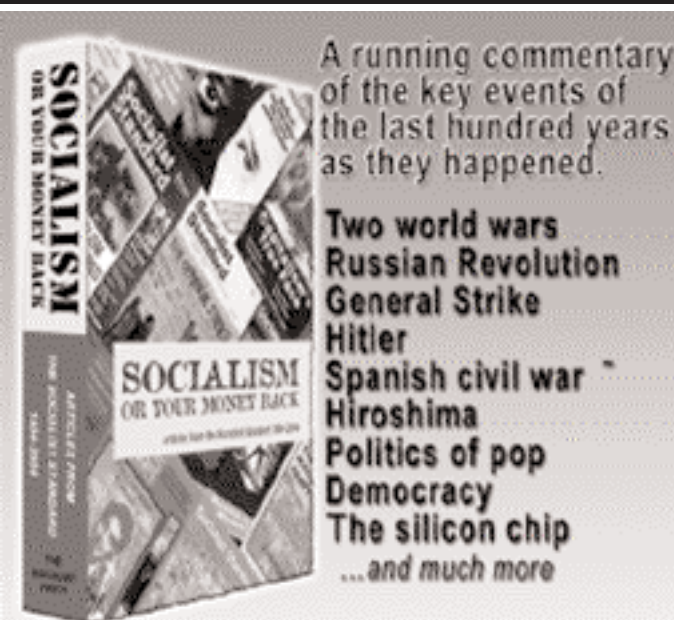
550,000 hectares of land in set-aside. This represents an area of countryside about 75km by 75km, twice the size of the area enclosed by the M25 around London.

In exchange for not planting crops on set-aside land farmers are paid a subsidy by the EEC to counter the loss of income that results from not utilising the land for productive use."

What is omitted here is that set-aside was compulsory only for the larger, more productive farms. So to them went most of the subsidies for this; which will have contributed to "the hefty amounts of cash" paid to the big landowners and agribusinesses. *The Times* calls this "obscene", but that's because it represents the interests of other sections of the capitalist class who resent having to pay the extra tax. Of course this was disguised as concern that "the food bill for the typical British family of four is some £600 higher per year than it would otherwise be". Perhaps, but the abolition of the CAP in favour of free trade in food would not make the average wage and salary worker better off by that amount, instead would exert a strong downward pressure on wage levels.

To socialists what is obscene is that farmers, and the most productive at that, are being paid not to grow food in a world where billions are undernourished, if not starving.

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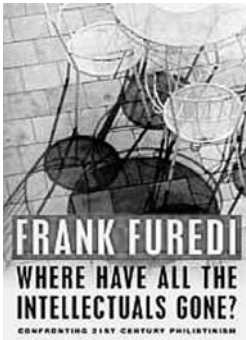
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Defending Modernism?

Frank Furedi: Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone? Continuum, 2004.



Frank Furedi takes the opportunity in this book to rail against the modern 'cultural elite' and their 'dumbing down' of political, educational and artistic standards. He forcefully argues that an all-pervading desire for 'inclusivity' - leading to the

flattery of interest groups - has replaced more hard-headed conceptions of scientific rigour, critical thought and above all, standards, as the driving force for decision-makers in the modern world. Today, he argues, participation (or the appearance of it) is seen as the key issue, while the role of the 'intellectual', as arbiter of taste, independent critical analyst and robust generator of original ideas, has been compromised and diminished.

This is interesting and provocative, particularly as Furedi - currently Professor of Sociology at the University of Kent - is better known as the leading theoretician of the Trotskyist political current which called itself the Revolutionary Communist Party until a few years ago, notable for their annual 'Preparing For Power' conferences and their glossily superficial *Living Marxism* magazine. That his views now seem to have more in common with those routinely expressed in the opinion columns of the *Daily Telegraph* clearly isn't something he feels the need to apologise for. Strangely enough, Mick Hume, the erstwhile editor of *Living Marxism* (or 'LM' as it became, in a needless concession to the postmodernist culture and 'dumbing down' Furedi now ironically rails against), happens to be a broadsheet columnist spouting similar views to Furedi himself. This does nothing to diminish the prevalent view on the British left that their organisation was a rather bizarre cross between a cult and a sect with a tendency to say anything controversial if it could get them some media attention.

For all that, Furedi's book is well worth reading. He is a thought-provoking writer and something of a critic of the present 'postmodern condition', where everything seemingly has a value of some sort and banality is elevated into an art form, where science and reason are merely another perspective on the world, and where all attempts at fundamentally changing society are doomed to failure, are dangerous - or both. Here he is tilling fertile ground, and his writing is stimulating and energetic.

A large part of the book focuses on the way in which public policy in the major capitalist states is currently using 'inclusivity' and 'widening access' as bogus ways of enfranchising the disenfranchised, whether it be in political life, the arts, or Higher Education. This involves the recognition and flattery of 'identities' (ethnic, gender, sexual, national) and the promotion of the idea that everyone creates

their own reality, a reality which is of equal worth to anything else in society - and all this at the expense of the rigorous, independent pursuit of vision and standards characteristic of the intellectual approach Furedi thinks is in the process of disappearing from public life.

There is an element of truth in this, even if some of Furedi's hobby-horses lead him astray periodically. For instance, the current agenda for 'widening access and participation' in HE is little to do with abstract social engineering but the response of successive governments to the demands of the labour market, including the demands of employers for more vocationally-focused university courses and for the creation of intermediate awards like Foundation Degrees. Indeed, this seems an odd point to need to make to someone who has spent most of his life calling himself a Marxist. Furthermore, even if Furedi is a half-decent sociologist he is certainly not much of an educationalist, as his comments on modern methods of teaching and learning, accreditation of prior learning and other issues tend to show, for here he is unreliable and his approach lacks the type of rigour and engagement with serious study he otherwise insists on.

But where Furedi's book misses the mark most noticeably is in his defence of the 'intellectual' as embodying everything that was good about Enlightenment ideals and modernist conceptions of progress. This is a partial, one-sided analysis and it is tempting to suspect that what Furedi really wants to defend is modernism, science and rationality itself against postmodernism, relativism and our seemingly irrational age. But this has already been done by others quite recently, such as by Francis Wheen, so Furedi has cast around for a new angle that only serves to distort the picture, robbing it of clarity.

Society doesn't need a new phalanx of intellectuals at all, it needs a reaction against reaction and a confidence that humankind generally can look beyond the fragments of the postmodern condition and collectively work towards a vision of how the world ought to be.

DAP

At the Coalface

The miners' strike. David Peace: GB84. Faber and Faber £7.99.



The author (above) describes this novel as 'a fiction based upon a fact', the fact being the 1984 miners' strike (on which see the *Socialist Standard* for March 2004). In a brutally honest style, told from the

viewpoints of several different characters, and interspersed with excerpts from the fictional diaries of two striking miners, Peace paints a vivid portrait of the strike and its eventual defeat.

A great deal of research underlies the book, and Peace brings out the extent of the ruling class' preparations for the strike and their determination to beat the miners into submission. Government fixers and corrupt undercover police are shown doing their dirty work. The divisions and hostilities within mining communities are displayed, and even some working miners are shown in an almost sympathetic light - one says he'd have been on strike had there been a ballot in favour of strike action. As the strike continues, the NUM become increasingly desperate in attempting to hide their financial assets overseas and out of reach of the government's stooges, while the Coal Board and the Tories seek to undermine the strike by getting almost all activity in support of it declared illegal and subsidising the back-to-work movement. There are suggestions that the police ranks are being boosted by soldiers, and the extent of police brutality is made plain.

The NUM leaders are depicted as pretty paranoid (though possibly with reason) about being bugged and being infiltrated. 'The President' comes over as an increasingly pathetic figure, harking back to his supposed defeat of the Heath government in 1974, and repeating the mantra that support from the wider trade union movement would ensure success. But as the numbers of working miners gradually increase and NUM funds are gradually leached away, he is unable to accept that defeat is ahead, nor that the failure to call a ballot was in any way responsible. The true heroes and victims, however, are the striking miners and their families. In the face of dreadful financial hardship, media lies, state violence, the threat of blacklisting and the inevitable petty quarrels of people under stress, they struggle to maintain solidarity and to keep the fight going. As families and friendships fall apart, they still remain committed.

David Peace's novel gives an unforgettable account of a major working-class struggle, and, despite the complexity of its structure, is well worth reading.

PB

The commons of South London

Down With The Fences: Battles for the Commons in South London, 36 pages, ú2; Past Tense Publications, c/o 56 Crampton St, London SE14, November 2004.

"The law condemns the man or woman Who steals the goose from off the common But lets the greater villain loose Who steals the common from the goose."

Most of the text of *Down With The Fences* was the basis of a talk given to the South London Radical History Group. Many of the open spaces in London - commons, woods, greens and parks - exist because they were preserved from development by collective action: by rioting, tearing down of fences or by legal action.

According to the pamphlet, between the 16th and 19th centuries, much of the open land, commons or woods south of the River Thames in London was enclosed for development, usually by rich landowners, or sold off for house building. Despite its name, the common land was rarely if ever actually land held in common. It was almost always land owned by the Lord of the Manor, on which over time local people had come to exercise some rights. But these rights often had no legal weight; they were just part of an unwritten social contract.

Of the "commoners", the pamphlet notes that some of them

"could become wealthy individuals themselves. Thus later struggles sometimes developed into struggles between different local rich persons. Gradually as capitalism developed, slowly replacing a society of complex vertical social obligations and customs with one based entirely on profit, the impetus was on for landowners to replace traditional land use with intensive agriculture. This demanded the clearing of woodland and the exclusion of the poor from the commons."

This process did not take place without massive upheavals. The enclosures increased resistance. The pamphlet describes the wave of rebellion for Sydenham Common, and the conflict on Westward Common in Barnes. Richmond Park, Streatham Common, Woolwich Common and South Lambeth Common are also mentioned. As late as the 1860s, there were struggles over access to Wimbledon Common.

By the 1850s, reformers were articulating the need for urban parks, to "relieve the stress and overcrowding of the city for the millions (of workers) packed into built-up areas". It was also hoped that by converting some open spaces and commons into landscaped parks, they would be made respectable "for the aspiring working classes". For example,

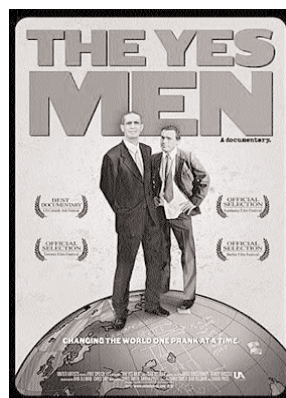
"In South London, Battersea Fields, until the 19th century a place of bawdy working class recreation, including animal fairs, stalls, drinking, etc. became Battersea Park. Local vicar Reverend Fallon proposed building of the modern park to encourage the poor to reform and 'become orderly'. As part of the process in 1852 all persons 'trespassing' on the park with animals or barrows were ordered to be nicked."

Stockwell Green was used for local recreation, often rowdy, until a local toff bought it and built railings round it. Wandsworth Common, as part of the wastes of the Manor of Battersea and Wandsworth, was largely enclosed and reduced in size, and split in three by the new railway lines in the 1840s. The pamphlet mentions numerous other open spaces, commons and parks in southern London, and the various battles and conflicts over their ownership and access. It notes, however, that the struggles described in South London were not unique. Through the 16th to the 19th centuries there were thousands of local battles against the enclosure and development of open spaces. And although not mentioned in the pamphlet, it should be noted here that in a socialist society all the land, and not just commons or parks, would be the common possession of society as a whole.

PEN

Film Review

The Yesmen, Cornerhouse, Manchester, (now available on DVD).



Less overtly manipulative than *Fahrenheit 451* but in a similarly subversive vein, *The Yesmen* is an attempt to wake up the public to all the corporate crap that is going on around the world in the

name of the WTO. The film shows Andy and Mike, *The Yesmen*, impersonating or "correcting" the identity of their targets, 'turning up the volume' on the aims of the WTO by exaggerating them to ludicrous extents. This is illustrated perfectly by their brief rundown of the rise of the textile industry in 19th century America thanks to "involuntarily imported labour" in the South, or by their proposal that the poor eat their own shit via recycled burgers.

The publicity blurb is promising enough, and the stunts are well represented but a lot of coverage is given to redundant talking-through, lengthening the introduction and giving more background detail on the preparation for the corporate leisure suit with huge phallic appendage than was strictly necessary. The first half of the film is taken up by the *Yesmen*'s talk at a textile conference in Tampere, leaving the camera to trail unevenly along to two other events which are less well covered in the second half.

This unevenness of treatment is a shame, because the idea behind the *Yesmen* is a good one, and could be an effective way of breaking through the hard capitalist coat of unthinking obedience to The Market. Of course, it is vastly entertaining to follow Andy and Mike as they prepare to take on a textile conference in Finland, stopping off in Paris to pick up little extras like the finishing touch for the manager's leisure suit, and as they meet up with fellow activists around the States for other stints. The underlying idea that subterfuge in the form of chameleon-like parodies will challenge those in power in the economic arena, or at least wake up a few conference goers, is laudable but hard work; in the capitalist world too many of these expensive 'conferences' are attended by too many real 'yesmen' and, unsurprisingly, there are few hostile reactions to the outrageous proposals that Andy and Mike make. Even the appearance of Andy on CNBC masquerading as GATT representative 'Granwyth Hulatberi,' spouting about the might of the rich compared to the poor who are wrong "because they are poor", fails to ring any alarm bells with the producer, even after the broadcast has gone out.

The one moment of hope comes when the *Yesmen* go to Sydney to address a meeting of the Certified Practising Accountants Association of Australia. Andy, speaking again as a WTO representative, has gone for the serious approach, telling it

straight - almost - by giving a rundown of shocking statistics and facts about corporate globalisation. He explains that the WTO has realised what has happened and is now going to close down in its current form, and start up in a new direction to try and right its wrongs by helping people, not business. The accountants lap it up and seem genuinely excited by this prospect and eager to do their bit. Although this interest from such a normally conservative crowd could be explained by the uncritical reaction that the *Yesmen*'s parodic interventions usually get, it could also be more proof that humanity would embrace a more humane society, given half the chance.

LF

Obituary

Ronnie Edwards

We are saddened to have to report the death of our comrade Ronnie Edwards in March. When we learned of the seriousness of his illness the shock was all the greater because he had looked in fine health at the party's Centenary Celebration in London last June. He had joined the party in Glasgow in 1966 when only seventeen and immediately threw himself in to the branch's activities in the city and elsewhere in Scotland.

In 1973 Ronnie moved to South Yorkshire. His brother Freddie soon joined him and both quickly got involved with local comrades in organising party activities in and around Leeds and Doncaster which led to the formation of the former West Yorkshire branch. Ronnie was still doing all he could for the party until only a few months ago when illness laid him low.

The party has lost yet another stalwart, and we extend our deepest condolences to his wife Winnie, son Josh, and to all his family north and south of the border.

VV

Africa: A Marxian Analysis.

A 30-page pamphlet on Africa, mainly reprints of articles from the *Socialist Standard* and mainly written by socialists living in Africa. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to:

- state and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Tribalism
- colonialism and capitalism
- religion, race and class
- Sharia law in Nigeria
- the education system in Ghana

Available from The Socialist Party. £1. (£1.35 by post, send cheque payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" to 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN).

Edinburgh and Glasgow branches Day School **SOCIALISM: DREAM OR REALITY?** Saturday 14th May 1pm to 5pm

1.00 to 2.15pm The Dream of Socialism

Ever since the break-up of primitive society the notion of a society without owners and non-owners has persisted. The dream of a more equalitarian society has persisted through the ages. Dick Donnelly (Glasgow Branch) considers some of these ideas and how they relate to modern society, with its hard-nosed attitude towards human behaviour.

2.15 to 3.30pm Can We Abolish World Hunger?

It is reckoned that millions of workers are dying inside capitalism. Paul Bennett (Manchester Branch) asks how do socialists cope with the notions of anti-globalisation and single-issue politics? In a world where war and world starvation is the norm how can a human being deal with the nastiness of modern society and offer an alternative?

3.30 to 4.45pm Is There An Alternative To Socialism?

In this session Brian Gardner (Glasgow Branch) looks at various attempts to patch up capitalism. He pays particular attention to recent notions about anti-globalisation and attempts to deal with world hunger through various ideas about taxation and wiping out debts. How practical are these ideas?

Tea, coffee and light refreshments will be available during the sessions. At all these sessions a speaker will open up for 20 minutes and the rest of the session will be taken up with questions and discussion. **COMMUNITY CENTRAL HALLS, Youth Wing, 304 MARYHILL ROAD, GLASGOW.**

Those requiring overnight accommodation should contact R.Donnelly, 112 Napiershall Street, Glasgow G20 6HT. Tel 0141 579 4109 or Email richard.donnelly1@ntlworld.com

Edinburgh Branch

West Lothian Socialist Discussion Group meeting will be on as usual. at The Lanthorn in Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston 7.30 till 9.30 tea/coffee served.

Contacts:

JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk

matt@wsnweb.fsnet.co.uk

ajsc21755@blueyonder.co.uk

The topics to be decided will consist of usual of short discussions from current activity as well as:

May 11th

The Real Class Division

We're supposed to be moving towards a more equitable society. Well how come class division is worse than ever?

May 25th

Could We Organise Things Without Money?

When everything has a price it is supposed to be easy to count costs. So what happens when you take price out of the equation?

Edinburgh Branch *The G8 Summit*

Speaker and title to be announced.

3pm to 5pm, Sunday 3rd July, Quakers Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terr (above Victoria St.) contact email

JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk

matt@wsnweb.fsnet.co.uk

ajsc21755@blueyonder.co.uk

This meeting will be held on the day after the protest march against poverty in Edinburgh, Saturday 2nd July. We intend to have a literature table at the march, and circulate and sell the *Socialist Standard*. Also, we will distribute a special leaflet to advertise Sunday's meeting.

This is an early call for all volunteers to make themselves available and just to generally spread the word. Check-out up to date info for Edinburgh Branch and West Lothian Group at:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NewsFromNowhere>

Manchester Branch meeting

Monday 23rd May, 8pm
Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre
Discussion on Poverty

Lancaster Branch meeting

Monday 2nd May, 8pm
The Gregson Centre, Moor Lane, Lancaster
What areas of science would be stopped in a socialist society?

WSM FORUM

Want to talk about what you've just read?

Can't make it to a meeting?

Discuss the questions of the day with Party members and non-members online.

Join the WSM forum via www.worldsocialism.org

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



The Dark Side of Sunny Jim



"Jim Callaghan's lips quivered, his hands shook, he had no idea what hit him"

It is not entirely clear why the late Lord Callaghan should have been known as Sunny Jim because there was a lot more to him than a supposedly genial, unflappable favourite uncle. While there are people who are grateful for his care for them when they were in trouble there is also a significant number who remember him as a thug and a bully. These are the people who came to know that beneath the surface Sunny Jim concealed an iron determination and excessive venom against anyone who crossed him. Hugh Dalton, who was the first Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1945 Labour Government, at first assessed Callaghan as "first class though with no manners and ruthless ambition", an opinion which he modified later to "obviously a trimmer and doesn't seem to have any deep convictions". Roy Jenkins, another Labour Chancellor, described him as "an aggressive pike eating up the minnows, with a brooding air of menace"; Barbara Castle, who was grievously mauled by him over the proposals for trade union "reform" in *In Place of Strife*, saw him as a menace on dry land: "a snake in the grass". What all these opinions, sometimes contradictory, add up to is that Callaghan was clearly well suited to a career in politics at the highest level. And so it turned out, because he held all the major governmental jobs - Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary and finally Prime Minister. This was pretty well unique, although that cannot be said about the fact that, by the standards which judge capitalist politicians, he failed in all four jobs.

Import duties

Callaghan was not unique in his politician's readiness to reel off sound bites which he came to regret. One of these was his assurance that, after one of the more minor crises, the outlook for the British economy was set fair: "steady as she goes" was how he put it. This was intended to

remind everyone that he had once been in the Navy and to comfort them with the image of a great liner being nudged into safe harbour, with captain Sunny Jim placidly in control on the bridge. What actually happened was that when, only a couple of days after the election, it became clear that British capitalism was in one of its recurring crises Callaghan's response was typical, desperate panic. One of the wheezes he hurriedly implemented in October 1964 was a temporary 15 per cent increase on some import duties which, far from solving the trading problems of British capitalism, provoked outrage and threats of retaliation abroad. In response the British government had to promise that the surcharge was only temporary and then, a few months later, to reduce the rate to 10 per cent. How calm and collected was Callaghan through all this? In November 1964, at a conference of ministers at Chequers, George Wigg recalled "Jim Callaghan's lips quivered, his hands shook, he had no idea what hit him." Prime Minister Wilson commented "I'm having to hold his hand. His nerve isn't very good these days".

Another wheeze, thought up by the unpredictably fertile brain of Callaghan's advisor on tax Nicky Kaldor, was the Selective Employment Tax (SET), reputedly a measure to re-distribute labour in a structural reform which would eliminate all those nasty problems which had bedevilled the British economy for so long. The SET was a tax on employers for every employee; manufacturing industry then received a rebate plus a premium for every employee. Agriculture received a rebate of the tax while the service industries did not get anything. This complexity was imposed in a hurry such as to belie its stated purpose of permanently reshaping British industry. One minister described its introduction to the Cabinet: "...bewilderment and consternation. Nobody could quite follow what he (Callaghan) was saying." In any case SET was virtually abandoned as part of the measures taken in conjunction with devaluation in 1967.

Resignation

Devaluation was supposed to be yet another radical step to improve the international trading position of British capitalism; after the event Harold Wilson declared: "It will be a relief to our people...they will feel that at last we have broken free..." But the Cabinet had been arguing about it almost since the day Labour got into power. Callaghan's attitude was uncertain but he warned:

"we must not underestimate the catastrophe of devaluation. It would be a political catastrophe as well as an economic one."

Ten days later he announced that the catastrophe had arrived; the pound was to be devalued and soon afterwards he resigned. This has been misconceived as the act of an honest politician accepting responsibility for a mistake. In fact Callaghan had wanted to give up being Chancellor for some time and in any case he was careful, and tenacious, enough not to resign from the Cabinet. What he did was to swap jobs with another member of the Cabinet, moving to the Home Office while Roy Jenkins took over as Chancellor.

Directly Callaghan became Home Secretary in November 1967 he was up against the problem of a prospective large intake of immigrants from Kenya who had

the right to come here because they held British passports. Immigration controls on people from the British Commonwealth were already in operation, having been introduced by the Conservative government in 1962. At that time the Labour Party strongly resisted the Act, as proclaimed by Hugh Gaitskell as far back as 1958:

"The Labour Party is opposed to the restriction of immigration as every Commonwealth citizen has the right as a British subject to enter this country at will."

Immigration

This appealed to some Labour supporters as a principled stand but it quickly crumbled when it was confronted with the threat of losing votes on the issue, so that during the 1964 election Labour made it clear that they would keep the 1962 Tory Act in operation. The issue came to something of a climax in that election when Labour lost Smethwick, and with it their prospective Foreign Secretary Gordon Walker, to a Tory who ran an openly racist campaign. By the time Callaghan got to the Home Office plans were already under way to rush through legislation to overturn the historic right of British passport holders to enter this country freely. Labour's Commonwealth Immigration Bill went even further than the 1962 Act; it was clearly an attempt to appease any racism among the voters, as it protected the right of entry of most white Commonwealth citizens while denying those rights to Kenyan Asians. This cynical piece of racist legislation was effortlessly seen through Parliament by Sunny Jim, who did not see any reason to resign over this latest example of a policy reversal.

In spite of all that had gone before, in his early days as his Prime Minister Callaghan seemed to be almost invulnerable. With amazing sleight of hand he kept his government going although it was in a minority in the House of Commons. In line with the policy of depressing working class living standards by holding wages down he saw off a strike by the firemen and persuaded the miners to accept a pay deal without a fight. There seemed no end to what he could accomplish by way of disciplining the workers in the interests of their employers - and all this, according to one aide, without trying to "break into the Guinness Book of Records for the amount of work done in twenty-four hours". But of course this could not, did not, last. The so-called pay policy went a step too far with an attempt to impose a limit of 5 per cent on rises, which was particularly hard on the lower paid workers. Denis Healey, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, later admitted that "we in the Cabinet should have realised that our five per cent norm would be provocative as well as unattainable" - and that was how it turned out.

Road haulage and oil tanker drivers went on strike for 25 to 30 per cent increases; local authority manual workers claimed 40 per cent and the Ford Motor Company agreed a rise of 17 per cent. This was followed by the series of strikes written into history as the Winter of Discontent. Callaghan called the election of 1979 "a sea change" when in fact it was an expression of disillusionment with the Labour Party, bringing the Thatcher government to press on with policies which Callaghan and his ministers had begun. ■

IVAN



SPORT IN A SICK SOCIETY

"To amuse or recreate oneself, by active exercise in the open air; to take part in some game or play; to frolic or gambol." *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. That is an



adequate description of sport before the advent of capitalism, it is wholly inappropriate today. Jose Canseco the former batsman of the Oakland Athletics tells all in his expose of modern baseball, *Juiced*. "Why did I take steroids? The answer is simple. Because myself and others had no choice if we wanted to continue playing. Because Major League Baseball did nothing to take it out of sport," he wrote. "Before they were sworn in, the committee heard emotional testimonies from parents of promising young baseball stars who had killed themselves while taking steroids. Health officials say that suicidal tendencies are one of the side-effects of steroid use" *The Times* (18 March). Just another example of capitalism destroying everything it touches, even baseball.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR

"A bishop in eastern Spain has cut his parish priests' stipend by 30 per cent after his dioceses lost up to €10 million (£6.8 million) on the stock market. He advised them to find the difference by putting collection boxes in their churches" *The Times* (1 April). Really good thinking, Bishop. But how does that fit up with the usual homilies you give the poor about "do not thirst after the material things of life". It seems that it is a good idea for

priests to tell punters but not necessarily a good one for the punters to tell the priests.

WELCOME TO THESE REFUGEES

A great deal of publicity is given to desperate workers travelling half the world to get a job in the UK but little is said of another group of immigrants who are welcomed with open arms to these shores. "Seven of the top richest billionaires in Britain come from overseas, according to *the Sunday Times* Rich List out tonight. The survey reveals that foreigners outnumber Britons at the top of the list, with steel tycoon Lakshmi Mittal topping the table with an estimated wealth of £14.8 billion. Chelsea Football Club owner and oil magnate Roman Abramovich drops to second place, but his wealth has held steady over the year at £7.5 billion" *The Scotsman* (3 April). Why do we never hear about restrictions of movement or of the introduction of Identity Cards for these people?

A NICE LITTLE EARNER

The death of the Pope was supposed to fill the world with grief according to the newspapers, but there was one group of entrepreneurs that were rubbing their hands in glee. "With Pope John Paul II's funeral expected to draw up to 2 million people, at least one consumer group is accusing cafes, restaurants, grocery stores and hotels near St Peter's Square of boosting prices to gouge tourists and pilgrims. ... Orlando Salvio, a waiter at a restaurant near St Peter's, said businesses are eager to cash in. 'Here everyone is happy - they're sad in a way, but happy in another,' he said. 'Obviously, the business owners are the happy one'" *Yahoo News* (4 April). A papal death can be good business for some.

NOW HE TELLS US

"Former UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix said Wednesday that oil was one of the reasons for the US-led invasion of Iraq, a Swedish news agency reported. 'I did not think so at first. But the US is incredibly dependent on oil,' news agency TT quoted Blix as saying at a security seminar in Stockholm. 'They wanted to secure oil in case competition on the world market became too hard'" *Canoe network: Cnews* (6 April). So eventually a spokesman for the capitalist class gets round to saying what socialists have been saying all along.

DYING FOR PROFIT

"The drug industry received a pasting this week and it wasn't entirely undeserved. MPs accused it of cultivating a reliance on medicine in the UK by over-promoting products and trying to find new markets by categorising more and more people as in need of treatment. ... we have been sold the idea that a drug is miraculous, only to be scared silly months later and told that

it might kill us. The recent withdrawal of the anti-arthritis drug Vioxx, once hailed by doctors as safe and now linked to thousands of deaths, is a case in point" *The Times* (9 April). "Over-promoting" and "finding new markets" is looked upon as good marketing strategy inside capitalism. A few deaths is hardly going to stop the drive for bigger and bigger profits. Sorry about your mother, by the way.



Vioxx: what's your poison?



The only cure for the capitalist headache

Free lunch

by Rigg



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Socialist Standard



Political Football
Election Analysis
School Dinners
Solidarity
Iran
Art in Socialism

June 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1210 £1

Capitalism & Football

Manchester United Faces The Penalty





You may find it is: *Political Football*, page 6



Where next for Bush? page 10



Sugar, little spice, and few things nice: *School Dinners*, page 12

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The Socialist Party of Great Britain

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Saturday 4th June at the address below.

Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary.

All articles, letters and notice should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.

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"Iran has to be warned by US gangster imperialists - don't mess with our interests; don't run a racket on our turf without our permission; don't deal with another mob."

Will Iran 'Be Next'? page 10

Sound and fury, but no change

War movies traditionally end with a wide-shot of a carnage-strewn battlefield, with the weary, tattered and bloodied victors staring glazedly across it, wondering about the pointlessness of it all. Was it really worth the valour, the bloodshed, the aches and the pains?

So too was the image of the newly re-elected Labour government, as its foot-soldiers clambered leadenly on to the summit of their high command's chosen objective, Third Term Hill. Never before has the Labour Party succeeded in claiming this prize - all other attempts were wrecked by landmines and pit-falls like wages policies, unemployment, national debt, and the like.

Under Tony Blair's leadership the Labourites realised that even presenting a minimal challenge to capitalist orthodoxy would fatally undermine their charge. Instead, they have stuck behind him as they marched single file up the straight and narrow path of capitalist politics, and thus their faction of the Capitalist Party has managed to scale the heights once more.

The voters rewarded their adherence to capitalism. The message of the election was - forget war, forget asylum, forget council tax, the British electorate overwhelmingly expressed their support for the wages system's continuing existence. Certainly, these other issues caused a few Labour extras to die suitably dramatic deaths by the wayside, but the heroic brothers and sisters of New Labour

are now definitively over the hill.

From that vantage point, they can see the eternal struggles before them. Looming economic slow down, which will crush their 'No return to boom and bust' armour. Their shield of the NHS will get smashed by the increased need to build up private sector health facilities. Their troops will grow mutinous as Major Blunkett will order them to fire on their pensions - a desperate attack on workers' pay and conditions to protect capital's profits.

The Labour Party has been in office for eight years now. The old Tory governing elite are in tatters, yet nothing has changed. Labour accepts and applauds the need for profits. But the demands of the state for money are tempered by the fact that the only way to get it is by digging into the profits of the capitalists.

In a social system geared towards making profits for the wealth owners any policy that cuts into profits will cause the sort of political turbulence that has wrecked previous Labour governments. To try and appease their base - to build the 'public services' they have put at the heart of their campaigns - they have had to increasingly turn to the private sector, to showing private capitalists how they can take a cut of the tax cake if they join the state in providing the services.

This happy alliance has seen Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and Public Finance Initiatives (PFI) meaning that the state has not had to increase its nominal size along with its real size. The wealth stays firmly in the hands of the private

capitalists. That has been New Labour's secret weapon. So long as the economic weather held, this alliance was good. If that weather changes - the unpredictable uncontrollable economic cycle turns nasty - then Labour will have to choose between eating into diminishing profits or turning their fire on the workers and voters who put them in office. Not that there's any doubt about which option they will go for.

Their new found focus on unmeasurable things like 'respect' - which sounds remarkably like John Major's 'Back to Basics' - means their devotion to sound and fury has increased. The hollow bugle calls of a desperate commander trying to sound in control.

That glorious leader, though, is now fatally wounded - a Nelson tenderly kissed by his hardy Lieutenant Brown. He will quit the field to retire to his millionaire lifestyle as reward for service tendered. While he limps on, though, voices from the Labour back will begin to murmur - what was the point? Why all the bluster, the fighting and battling just to take another forsaken hill in a pointless political war that makes a lot of noise about making very little change?

Until the banner of a consciously socialist movement, though, takes the field what looks like a war movie to some, will remain a horror flick for the rest of us.



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email: richardbotterill@hotmail.com. 2nd & 4th Mon. 7.30. Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place, W1 (near Marble Arch) **Enfield and Haringey branch.** Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL. email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Mon. 7.45pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

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http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/ **Glasgow branch.** 1st and 3rd

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Would people in socialism spend all day voting on everything?

A socialist society will be one in which all people will be free to participate fully in the process of making and implementing policy. Whether decisions about constructing a new playground, the need to improve fish stocks in the North Sea, or if we should use nanobots to improve our lives, everyone everywhere will be able to voice their opinion and cast their vote. However, the practical ramifications of this democratic principle could be enormous. If people feel obliged to opine and vote on every matter of policy they would have little time to do anything else. On the other hand, leaving the decision-making process to a system of elected executive groups or councils could be seen as going against the principle of fully participatory democracy. If socialism is going to maintain the practice of inclusive decision making (which does not put big decisions in the hands of small groups) but without generating a crisis of choice, then a solution is required, and it seems that capitalism may have produced one in the form of 'collaborative filtering' (CF) software.

This technology is currently used on the internet where a crisis of choice already exists. Faced with a super-abundance of products and services, CF helps consumers choose what to buy and navigate the huge numbers of options. It starts off by collecting data on an individual's preferences, extrapolates patterns from this and then produces recommendations based on that person's likes and dislikes. If you have already made purchases via the internet then you are probably familiar with the statement 'People who liked this product also liked...', which is CF at work. As well as making recommendation on what you should buy, it also suggests what you may like to watch on telly, what concert to attend or where to go on holiday.

With suitable modification, this



Could too much voting be bad for you?

technology could be of use to socialism - not to help people decide what to consume, but which matters of policy to get involved in. A person's tastes, interests, skills, and academic achievements, rather than their shopping traits, could be put through the CF process and matched to appropriate areas of policy in the resulting list of recommendations. A farmer, for example, may be recommended to vote upon matters which affect him/her, and members of the local community, directly, or of which s/he is likely to have some knowledge, such as increasing yields of a particular crop, the use of GM technology, or the responsible use of land by ramblers. The technology would also put them in touch with other people of similar interests so that issues can be thrashed out more fully, and may even inform them that 'People who voted on this issue also voted on...'

The question is, would a person be free to ignore the recommendations and vote on matters s/he has little knowledge of, or indeed not vote at all? Technology cannot resolve issues of responsibility, but any system, computer software or not, which helps reduce the potential burden of decision making to manageable levels would

How would people vote?

The traditional image of huge crowds with their hands up in council meetings, or queues of people lining up to put a piece of paper in a box, is obviously becoming old-fashioned, even in capitalism. The UK government, along with many others, has been toying for a long time with the idea of greater public participation through e-democracy and e-voting. Many MPs already maintain websites and many more are being encouraged to interact with the public in this way.

Noting the enthusiasm of young people to use telephone and online voting in TV competitions, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister thinks e-voting could have a major effect on turn-out in the hard-to-reach youth age group. Stephen Coleman, professor of e-democracy at the Oxford Internet Institute, regards this as a dubious aim and claim, instead arguing that the relationship between MPs and people has to change throughout the period of government, not just at elections: "The relationship is changing. Politicians who don't use the internet will miss out and will eventually fall by the wayside", he said. (BBC News technology, Tues, May 17)

Even allowing that MPs take the professor's advice, it seems unlikely that an appearance of greater participation



Exclusive, inconvenient, time-consuming and ... old hat.

will actually translate into genuine participation, given that capitalism is only interested in giving us a say when the issue at stake doesn't really matter. Nonetheless, capitalism's drive to make its democratic forms look more participatory may be doing socialism's work for it, so that in the future the technology to debate, dispute, appeal, complain, conference and vote will all be in place - at the touch of a phone button.

Red Snapper

Sound bites and unsound nibbles

I don't look like a millionaire, I don't act like a millionaire, I am not a millionaire."

George Galloway, REPECT MP, ahead of addressing the Washington senators who have accused him of receiving vouchers for millions of barrels of oil from Saddam Hussein's regime. Daily Mail, May 17th.

They chose me. Can't you find it even within yourself even to congratulate me?"

George Galloway again on his election victory to Jeremy Paxman, from The Guardian, May 7th.

We expect the Revolution will create entirely new genres to expand the definition of video games," he said to loud cheers in the hall.

Nintendo president Satoru Iwata, on a new console, BBC Technology, May 17

People remembered why they had lost trust in Tony Blair, but they couldn't see any real difference between the Tories and Labour, so we lost out on that."

Lynton Crosby, Tory Party campaign director, Independent, May 20

A student who misbehaves gets two verbal warnings, then detention for one hour and finally a day in the isolation unit. It is very rare that a student gets sent there for three days.

Sir Dexter Hutt, executive headmaster of three schools in Birmingham, where he has introduced isolation rooms, Sunday Times, May 15

COMING UP

How free is our free time? Socialist ideas often focus on the nature of employment in capitalism. But what about our time away from work, when we try to forget about our unfulfilling or stressful jobs? How does the capitalist system – and its ideology – influence what we do in the evenings and at weekends? We might go to the pub. Or the football ground. Or the cinema. Or we might just smoke a joint and watch the parade of celebrities on television. The media plays a massive part in our culture. Television, the internet, newspapers and magazines – all offer us windows on the rest of the world. But this comes at a price when what we see is shaped by the capitalist preoccupations of media giants like the BBC and the Fox Network. However, even within the mainstream media, anti-capitalist ideas can sometimes break through, in popular music as well as in investigative journalism.

Our weekend of talks and discussion looks at how entertainment and culture in capitalism shape our ideas and behaviour, reinforcing our acceptance of the status quo.

We also discuss how we might entertain ourselves in a socialist society. Would there be less of a distinction between entertainment and work, as William Morris argued?

What culture would we create without the dictates of big business?

Residential attendance (inc. accommodation and all meals) costs £110. Non-residential attendance (inc. most meals) costs

£30. Concessionary rates are available. To confirm your booking, send a cheque or postal order for £10 made out to the Socialist Party of Great Britain to Ron Cook, 11 Dagger Lane, West Bromwich, B71 4BT. State whether you require a single or twin room and vegetarian meals, and include your contact details. For more details, tel. 0121 553 1712 or e-mail yes-utopia@blueyonder.co.uk



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The News Media—Steve Trott
Anti-capitalism in the Mainstream Media—Brian Gardner
Drugs—Mike Foster
Music and Protest—Paddy Shannon
Entertainment in Socialism—Stan Parker

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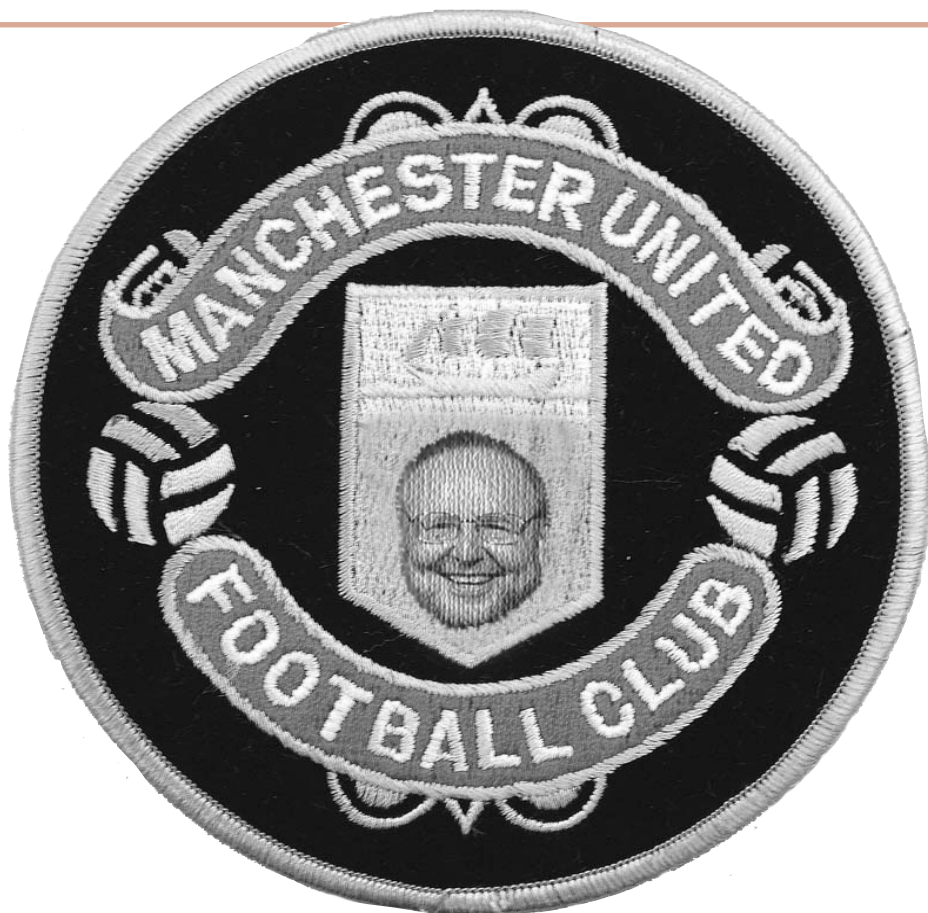
- Two World Wars
- Russian Revolution
- General Strike
- Hitler
- Spanish Civil War

- Hiroshima
- Pop music
- Democracy
- Silicon Chip
- ...and many more



The Political Football

In the market economy money talks, and US tycoon Malcolm Glazer has shouted the loudest.



The recent success of Malcolm Glazer, the US tycoon, in gaining a 75 per cent controlling interest in Manchester United has once again propelled the club into the media spotlight, and for reasons most of its fans find abhorrent. Long used to the idea that United was 'their' club, they have found out that what seemed to be 'their' club was not really theirs at all. It is, of course a common and understandable illusion: 'our street' is an expression of affinity more than a statement regarding ownership, 'our town', 'our city' and 'our club' likewise.

It is clear that the vast majority of Manchester United fans oppose the Glazer takeover, and many thousands have worked tirelessly to try and stop it, but to little effect. In the market economy money talks, and Glazer has shouted the loudest.

In a sense, the fears of United fans are understandable. Although Glazer claims to be a United fan there is little evidence of this (his interest previously has been in US baseball) and a lot of evidence that he is really in it just to make money. Most of the capital he has used to buy his stake in the club is loan capital, most likely amounting to around £540 million if reports are to be believed, and he is keen to recoup these monies and pay off his creditors as quickly as possible. One of his key aims appears to be to ensure that what is already the most recognisable brand name in football has an even wider audience and depth of penetration in terms of its marketing and merchandising across the world. The other is to negotiate separate, lucrative TV deals for the club outside of the existing arrangements for the Premiership and other competitions. Overturning the existing financial set-up at United by stealth and angering the long-existing and highly successful management team are by-products of a wider game plan - to make more profit out of an already highly profitable venture.

Administration

Whatever problems face Manchester United at present, they pale into insignificance compared to those of many of the clubs lower down the food chain. The collapse of ITV Digital financially devastated a number of Football League clubs, to whom they were the principal sponsor, and in total more than 30 league clubs have now gone into administration in recent years - over a third. The creation of the Premier League had previously exacerbated an already existing tendency for the rich clubs to get richer while the poorer ones got poorer, and the collapse of ITV Digital was almost the last nail in the coffin for many.

As football clubs across the UK ailed, so the vultures circled. And most of those vultures took the form of property speculators, attracted by the land that was the principal asset of the clubs. Clydebank,

“football has become infested by the sort of parasites whose idea of fun is making money”

Wimbledon, Chester and York are just three of the clubs who became notable victims of these predators, with Clydebank being killed off by them completely.

The stories of two other clubs though are more illustrative than most, combining many of the defining characteristics of institutions that fall prey to the worst aspects of market forces at work in sport. Both are also smaller clubs that have nevertheless punched above their weight in footballing terms and have a higher profile than their size might otherwise suggest, both have occupied land in prime positions

with a high redevelopment potential, and both have been subjected to highly underhand takeovers that have driven them - possibly deliberately - to the brink of financial ruin.

Brighton

Brighton and Hove Albion is a club that has now been in crisis for ten years, following the sale of their former home, the Goldstone Ground, a sale which was pushed through without the club having another ground to play at. The two men responsible for this were the Chief Executive David Bellotti and club director Bill Archer. Bellotti, a former Liberal Democrat MP for neighbouring Eastbourne, showed that the Lib Dems are not all about respect for the environment and high ideals associated with fighting for the worst off in society - the Goldstone Ground became a retail park dominated by a Burger King and Bellotti was literally chased out of the ground in Brighton's last season there by irate fans.

After a hugely unsuccessful groundshare at Gillingham, Brighton returned home to their present site at the Withdean Stadium, little more than an athletics track with a pitch in the middle and some temporary stands. For a variety of logistical reasons, the only really viable venue for Brighton's proposed new ground is on land at Falmer just outside the city, and for several years now a running battle has ensued to try and secure permission for the club to move there, culminating in a lengthy and messy public enquiry and then the involvement of the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott.

While the move to Falmer may still be some way off, what is most interesting about the Brighton story is not just the way in which the club was fleeced to line the pockets of property developers and kicked out of its ground, but the way in which their fans organised themselves to ensure the club's survival. They became the backbone



A United fan makes her point

of the Fans United organisation which fights for the interests of football fans in the UK and attempts (increasingly successfully) to encourage fans to leave their tribal loyalties aside and to support club's battling against hostile takeovers and property speculators.

Wrexham

Wrexham FC's fight against property speculators is more recent and the club still occupies its Racecourse Ground home, albeit under notice of eviction. In 2002 a majority stakeholding in the club was secretly bought by a company owned by Alex Hamilton, a former struck-off solicitor from Manchester, who - without making his ownership public - installed his then business partner Mark Guterman as chairman and front man. Guterman already

had a dubious record as the man who took local rivals Chester City into administration after wages and Inland Revenue demands had gone unpaid and the water board had arrived to cut off the supply.

Within a couple of years exactly the same sequence of events unfolded at Wrexham until the club's fans organised a 'red card protest' directed at Guterman at their last home match of the 2003-4 season, interestingly enough against Brighton, whose fans supported it enthusiastically having been in a similar situation themselves. At this point Hamilton sacked Guterman and installed himself as Chairman, having already been outed as the real owner of the club, and after secret plans to redevelop part of the Racecourse land and rotate the pitch 90 degrees had been uncovered.

Since then developments have been peculiar enough to have graced the plot lines of the likes of *Dallas* or *Dynasty*. Hamilton, whose bizarre antics in life had years before been unmasked by *Private Eye*, was revealed to have transferred ownership of the Racecourse Ground and surrounding land from the club itself to one of his own companies for the princely sum of one pound. This happened without consulting the Wrexham FC shareholders, thereby stripping the club of its major asset in an act described by BBC's *Week In Week Out* as 'completely illegal'. In an increasingly bizarre series of events he was banned from the ground by the police on matchdays, described Wrexham fans as 'luddites', 'lowlife' and 'detritus' and stated that his battle with them to remove the club from the Racecourse was 'the most fun I've had with my clothes on since I was 21 years of age'.

The club's remaining directors eventually forced his resignation from the chairmanship which then allowed them to put the club into the relative safety of administration, from which position the administrators have so far managed to resist Hamilton's attempts to move the bulldozers in and raze the site for a retail development

- a development that could net him as much as £15 million for a paltry initial outlay. A legal battle over owed money with former chum Mark Guterman is ongoing, as are police investigations reportedly into missing gate receipts, under-declared attendances and other irregularities, recently culminating in a High Court injunction battle by Guterman and Hamilton over access to audio tapes made by a Wrexham fan.

Money talks

While someone like Hamilton may be a highly idiosyncratic individual, he represents something much more routine about the world of business. In a society where common endeavour and shared identity count for little where there is a quick buck to be made, it can be no surprise that football has become infested by the sort of parasites whose idea of fun is making money, especially at other people's expense. The market economy creates the conditions in which they can prosper and seize control of assets that communities often mistakenly think are theirs already. The people of Brighton, Wrexham and many others towns and cities across Britain have recently been finding this out the hard way.

One encouraging aspect of this though is the vigorous resistance people have had to offer and of the radicalisation of their ideas in the process. 'Kick Property Speculators Out of Football' and 'Football Not Profit' are the kind of banners that are currently seen at soccer grounds up and down the country, indicative of another groping attempt by the victims of the market economy to make sense of what is happening and to identify problems to be overcome.

Unfortunately, those problems can never be overcome within the confines of a system that rewards vultures like Glazer at United, Archer and Bellotti at Brighton and Hamilton at Wrexham as a matter of course, and which summons up new rich pickings for parasites to squabble over on a seemingly daily basis. ■

DAP



Cooking the Books (1)

What is like gravity?

Where you have generalised production for the market, the production and distribution of wealth

escapes from human control and comes to be dominated by economic laws - such as "no profit, no production", "minimise costs", "maximise profits", "accumulate more and more capital" - which impose themselves on those taking day-to-day economic decisions as if they were natural laws.

In fact, early students of how the capitalist economy worked such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo thought that they really were studying natural laws, but Marx pointed out that this was only the appearance: the economic laws of capitalism only arose out of the particular social and economic basis of capitalism under which the means of production belonged to a minority class and where

everything was produced for sale on a market with a view to profit. If capitalism were to be abolished, these economic laws would cease to operate; on the other hand, they would continue to operate as long as capitalism existed.

In this sense Colin Hines, an economic adviser to the Green Party, was right when he wrote in the *Guardian* (25 April) that "Globalisation is not like gravity", meaning by globalisation the effects of the pressures exerted on the home economy by competition on the world market:

"The fact that countries with higher costs haven't a hope of competing with those where labour is cheap seems crushingly obvious".

Yes, it is, and this is one of the economic laws of capitalism, but he then went on:

"Yet in Britain, only one party has grasped it: the Greens. They have realised that to help workers worldwide we

must stop gearing economies to ruthlessly out-compete each other. We need new goals: maximising self-reliance and ensuring that trade rules are governed by a pro-poor approach . . . Trade rules must be rewritten to discriminate in favour of domestic production".

But the existing trade rules, as for instance embodied in and enforced by the World Trade Organisation, are not just a voluntary policy option, but essentially a reflection of the economic laws of capitalism. Globalisation may not be like gravity, but it's not like putty either. In fact, as long as capitalism lasts, it is like gravity. If the Green Party thinks that the trade

rules/economic laws of capitalism can be changed so as to stop ruthless competition on the world market, and to be governed by a "pro-poor approach" or to permanently discriminate in favour of higher-cost domestic production, then they must be living on a different globe to the rest of us.



That was democracy, was it?

It is great to live in a democracy. Fantastic that we are so free that 22 percent of us can elect a government that will rule for up to five years - and if we disagree with its policies we can be told, "You had a choice, we were democratically elected, after all." It isn't as if these democratic rulers aren't aware of the gaps in their theories. The famously defeated Foot-led Labour Party of 1983 went into the election hoping for just such an outcome, to squeak into government on the back of a splintered national vote.

The gremlins of parliamentary party politics, though, simply refuse to go away. Politicians threaten and blackmail us - let us be bastards to you or find out just how much worse the other lot will be. The out parties can make great play of the high crimes and misdemeanours of the ins, and the great merry-go-round continues. They talk about resurgence, recovery, growth, and carve their faces into sombre masks to show just how seriously we should take them.

Of course, now we'll hear witterings about introducing proportional



But how many ended up voting Labour anyway?

representation - Labour's trump card to keep the Tories out forever. Their manifesto hinted obliquely at the possibility - they promised a referendum on further constitutional change, without mentioning what that might be. That would not, though, make any real difference.

The whole system is set up to remove political power from the hands of the voters as much and for as long as they will put up with it. The Iraq war is an excellent case in point. We are always being told that elections are a time to hold governments to account. Yet, when the election came, Labour made it clear that voters would be cutting off their nose to spite their face if they voted Labour out and (the only likely alternative) the Tories in. Imagine if banks worked this way: you give us all your

Democracy as it is and as it could be

Many people would argue that Britain is a democracy and that we all benefit from living in a democratic society. By this they would probably mean the regular holding of elections to parliament and local councils, the freedom to organise political parties, a press which is not beholden to the government, and the rule of law. If people object to the policies of the government or a particular MP, they can vote them out of office. If they oppose a



Political prisoners - liberal democracy could be better, and it could be worse

specific action by a local council, they can set up a protest group and hold demonstrations, without the fear of being carted off to prison just for voicing their views.

In this, comparisons would be drawn

with dictatorships, where elections may be non-existent or a sham, where independent parties and trade unions are outlawed, where the press just follow the government line, and arbitrary arrest and even torture are commonplace. Such comparisons are by no means valueless, and capitalist democracy is definitely useful to workers, yet the idea that elections and the other points listed above in themselves constitute democracy needs a great deal of reflection.

For do the trappings of democracy, as we might call them, really guarantee a truly democratic way of life? Do they ensure 'rule by the people', which is the etymology of 'democracy'? Socialists argue that the answer to these questions is a resounding 'no!', that real democracy - a social democracy, as it might be called - involves far more. The problem is that under a capitalist system there is a built-in lack of democracy, which cannot be overturned or compensated for by holding elections or permitting protest groups. Our objections are far more basic than

suggestions that proportional representation is the best electoral system.

In the first place, capitalism involves an inevitable inequality, between on the one hand those who have to work for a living or who depend on a family member who does so, and on the other

those who own enough land, shares or bonds that they have no need to work. This is a division between two classes, the working class and the capitalist class, between those who do the useful work but are paid a pittance and those who live a life of luxury in country houses, posh flats and expensive clubs and restaurants. Those who have more money have more power and more control than those who have far, far less. This is partly a matter of mere wealth: if I have one hundred times as much money as you, then I have far more say over how I spend my time, where I live, what my children can experience, and so on. Workers have to struggle with a mortgage, fear of redundancy or a monotonous job, and have far less control over their lives. So poverty and inequality of wealth undermines any claims that capitalism can be democratic.

But there is more to be said. The capitalist class have power not just over their own lives but over those of workers as well. They can order the closure of factories, as at Rover or Marconi, the building of a new motorway, the invasion of another country, all of which can affect the workers who will lose their jobs, suffer noise and disruption, or have to fight and die on behalf of their masters. The press may be formally 'free', but in practice newspapers are owned by capitalists and so will naturally reflect pro-capitalist views in their

"The problem is that under a capitalist system there is a built-in lack of democracy"

money, we spend it for you and you can sack us afterwards if you don't like the way we spent it. No one would buy that deal, surely, yet they do, at every election.

The vote was too blunt an instrument to express any opinion on the war, all it could ask was which of the parties seen to be in contention did voters want to see in charge.

In the old Soviet Union people could vote. They faced a fixed choice, though, either for or against the sole Communist Party candidate. Cold warriors, correctly, condemned this as a sham of democracy. Yet in Britain, where three parties receive blanket media coverage year round, and even during the election campaign, we are told we have a genuine free choice.

The impression that everyone else is going to vote for one of these parties means that people become unwilling to vote for a fringe party. Effectively, the mass media is a free co-ordinating mechanism, sending signals between voters letting them know how their neighbours will vote so they can think of how best - pragmatically - to use their vote. Those not voting for the top two candidates in any given constituency may as well spoil their ballot, for all it effects the outcome of the election.

Mistaken identity

There are, though, other short cuts to this sort of co-ordination. Instead of building a community of ideas, a party may find existing groups and try and use them as a basis for building their vote. Thuswise the ill-named RESPECT coalition, of the erstwhile Trotskyists of the SWP and litigious ex-Labour bully-boy and friend of dictators George Galloway has tried to harness the anti-war movement and Muslim workers to their ends.

Instead of appealing to them as workers, they appeal to them according to their prejudices, assuaging their mis-identification of themselves with their ideas rather than with their way of life. Other parties have tried a similar tactic - the BNP claim to defend 'White British Culture' from the depredations of multi-culturalism. This in turn is a response to both Labour and Tories trying the same trick with a multi-cultural identity of Britishness. All of them, leaders looking for followers.

Behind the swirl, smoke and bluster of identity politics and electoral nose counting lies the issue that dare not speak its name: class. Class requires people to examine how they live, not how they feel. It automatically implies conflict and division, something that someone who wants to harvest all votes they can, come what may, would not

care to invoke. You don't win friends by disagreeing with people. You don't change their minds by agreeing with them.

What this masks is that we live in a society where a tiny minority must protect its own interests from those of a vast majority. Democracy is anathema to the owners of property, because they want to retain the benefits of that property for themselves. No matter how little our say in government is, we have still less say over the use and allocation of wealth in our world - the real decisions that matter. Were the capitalist class to lose their tight rein on the state, it could become a threat to their position. Small elites and hierarchies are easier to manage than free flowing and open democracies.

Democracy is not about a constrained choice once every four years, in winner takes all elections. Democracy means having the opportunity to intervene in making proposals, amending them and finally deciding upon them - as well as in implementing them. The more people can exercise a say in those actions, the more democratic the process becomes.

Information must flow freely, so all can have an opportunity of reaching a decision, of judging the performance of delegates and appointees, of deciding to challenge the actions of one body in a higher authority; and in real democracy, the higher authorities are those bodies which contain more members of the community concerned. Everyday life must be the signalling system that lets people know what their fellows want, the way of co-ordinating votes and decisions.

A society of common ownership would have no need of constricting decision-making. We would share a common interest, and most people's actions and decisions would be immediately related to their day-to-day outcomes. Democracy would be an everyday process, just as the management of workplaces is now for the appointees of the owners. Just as appointees now are accountable to and removable by the owners, when we own all the wealth in common we will have structures to ensure that we retain control of all decision-making levels where we feel we have need to intervene, not ritualistically handing that control over to rulers periodically.

As it is, though, we continue with Tony Blair blathering about building a society of, er, respect - because that's all he can do, he has no control of the passing show in the hands of the property owners. This will last, though, only as long as the workers tolerate it. It's up to us to keep disagreeing with them. ■

PIK SMĒET



Capitalism's real voting papers

pages. The government, too, is there to administer the system on behalf of the capitalists, something they do irrespective of which party is occupying 10 Downing Street.

In fact, though, there is a sense in which the government does not run the system at all - rather, the capitalist system runs the government, by limiting the actions that can be taken. The capitalists and their governments can propose what they like, but it is the capitalist economy that disposes. Raising of interest rates, increased unemployment, devaluation -

these may not be what governments want to do, but may well be what they are forced to do because capitalism leaves them no choice.

There are at least three reasons, then, why capitalist democracy does not mean that workers are in charge of their own lives. They are too poor to be able to do what they want to do, being limited by the size of their wage packets. They are at the beck and call of their employers in particular and of the capitalist class in

general. And they are at the mercy of an economic system that goes its own sweet way without being subject to the control of those who suffer under it.

In contrast, Socialists advocate a way of organising society that will result in real democracy, where people genuinely run their own lives and are not pushed around by bosses. Firstly, Socialism will do away with the inequality of capitalism. With free access to what has been produced, everybody (that's absolutely everybody) will be able to decide on their own consumption, living conditions, and so on. There will no longer be a forced 'choice' between a new car and a summer

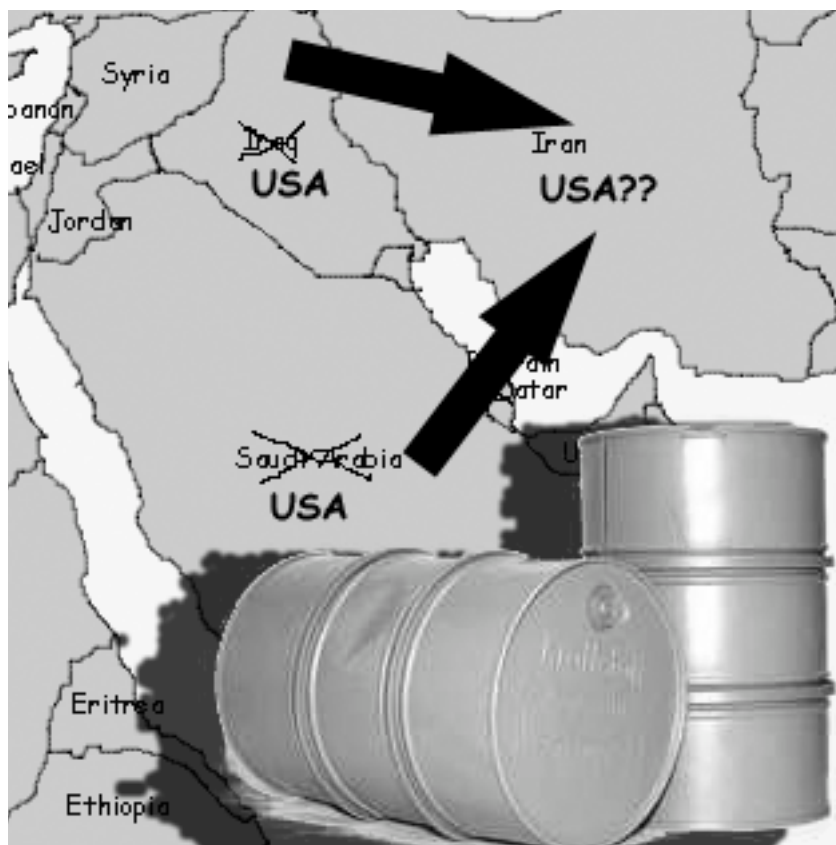
holiday. Poverty will no longer limit people's lives and experiences.

Secondly, there will be no employment, no employers and no capitalist class. Nobody will therefore be able to make decisions about the livelihoods (and, indeed, the very lives) of others. Nobody will have privileged access to the media and means of communication and so be in a special position to influence the views of other people.

And thirdly, the uncontrollability of the capitalist economy will be a thing of the past. Production will be for use, not for profit, and there will be no more gluts or 'overproduction'. With all the paraphernalia of money, accounting, interest rates and the bottom line done away with, there will be no obstacles to people producing what is wanted.

More positively, Socialism will involve people making decisions about their own lives and those of families, friends and neighbours - decisions unencumbered by so many of the factors that have to be taken into account under capitalism. The means of production (land, factories, offices) will be owned in common, and everybody will help to determine how they will be used. This need not mean endless meetings, nor can we now give a blueprint of how democratic decision-making in Socialism will work. Quite likely there will be administrative structures at different levels, local, regional and so on. This will not just be the trappings of democracy but the real thing - people deciding about and running their own lives, within a system of equality and fellowship. ■

Paul Bennett



Will Iran 'be next'?

After the ongoing debacle of the Iraqi invasion, many people will be aghast at US threats against Iran. Are they serious?

On 10 May, the Iranian government began what may turn out to be a full-blown global crisis when it announced that it is to continue with its nuclear programme. Although Tehran claims it is intent on forging ahead and enriching uranium for civil purposes, the Bush administration is rehashing one of the lies that it used to invade Iraq: namely, that Iran will be manufacturing nuclear weapons that it may well give to terrorists.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which carries out regular inspections in Iran, recently issued a report declaring that it has found no proof of a nuclear weapons programme in Iran. Moreover, according to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which Iran is a signatory and to which the US cocks a snoot, non-nuclear countries do in fact have the right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes, on condition they inform the IAEA of their progress.

There is nothing to substantiate Washington's claims that Iran is intent on

producing a nuclear arsenal, yet before the Iraqi war is finished, the hawkish neo-conservative misinformation machine is at work creating fear that the US is in danger from Iranian nukes unless, we are supposed to infer, America preemptively attacks Iran.

Washington has argued that with all its oil Iran does not need nuclear energy - a statement that smacks of hypocrisy for many reasons, not least because it was Washington that enthusiastically encouraged the Shah's nuclear programme in the 1970s - and that its desire to continue its nuclear research is clear evidence of its malicious intentions. Again, whilst the US sounds off about other countries having advanced defence systems, we find that the biggest stockpiler of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons is the US itself, and which has a proven track record of having used them.

The world's number one rogue state - the US - furthermore feels free to rubbish the nuclear test-ban treaty so its

weapon scientists can enhance the US's new theatre nuclear weapons and to develop space-based weapons systems capable of annihilating whole armies in an instant.

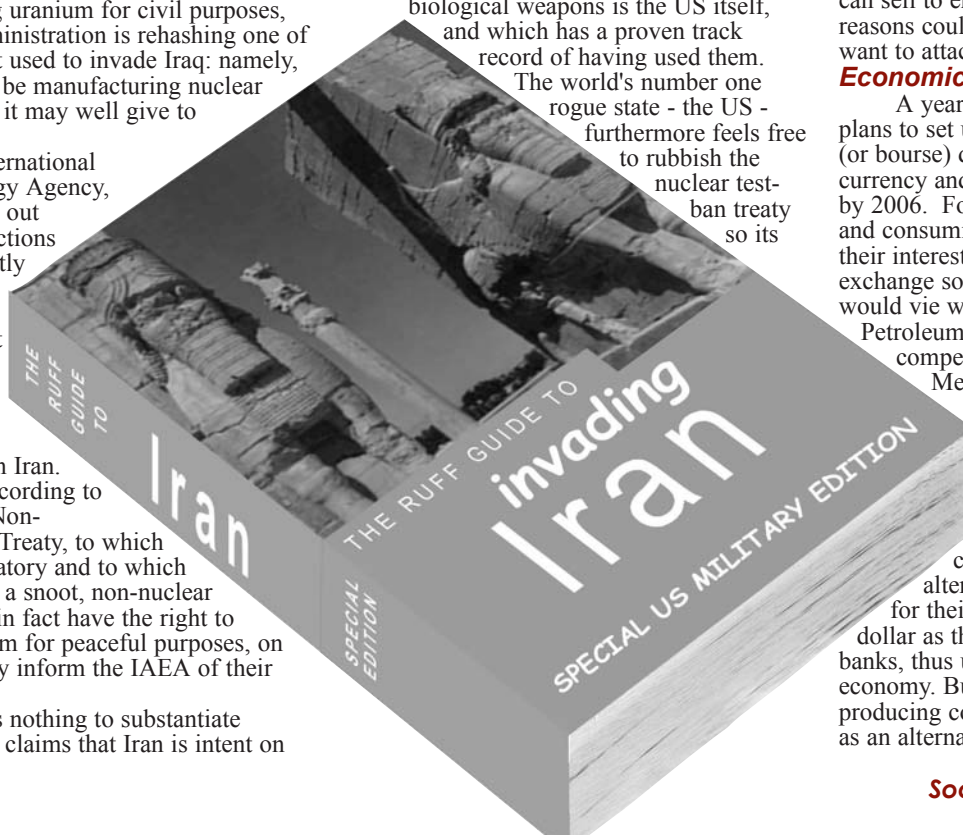
Iran - not so long ago named by President George W. Bush as one-third of the "axis of evil" - is surrounded by US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq (countries that have been flattened by American bombs in the past four years), not to mention the Fifth Fleet and numerous US bases in the southern Gulf States. Naturally Iran feels a little threatened so it could be that Tehran is working on the assumption that those countries that possess nuclear weapons - Israel, Russia, India, Pakistan, China, and North Korea - generally get treated a lot better by the US than smaller countries that do not.

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, Undersecretary of State John Bolton was credited with the words: "real men want to go to Iran". Iraq, it was suggested, was just the first stage of a five-year plan. Iran, with a larger population and better defence systems would certainly not be as placid a foe as the Iraqi forces were and US casualties would be many times those suffered during the invasion of Iraq were the US to launch an invasion of Iran. So, leaving aside the fallacious argument that Iran is intent on building nuclear weapons it can sell to enemies of the US, what other reasons could there be for these 'real men' to want to attack Iran?

Economic competition

A year ago this month Iran announced plans to set up an international oil exchange (or bourse) denominated in the euro currency and that this would be in operation by 2006. For several years oil-producing and consuming countries have expressed their interest in trading through such an exchange so, logically, such an oil bourse would vie with London's International Petroleum Exchange (IPE) as well as competing with the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX), both of which are owned by US corporations.

Since the US Dollar has been so far the global standard monetary fund for oil exchange, oil consuming countries have had little alternative but use the \$US to pay for their oil, forcing them to keep the dollar as their reserve fund in their central banks, thus underpinning the American economy. But were Iran and other oil-producing countries presented with the euro as an alternative choice for oil exchange the



American economy would go through a real crisis. It is possible the crisis could come at the end of 2005 and the commencement of 2006 when oil investors would be faced with the option of paying \$50+ a barrel of oil at the American (NYMEX) and at London's (IPE), or €37 a barrel at the Iranian oil bourse. Such a choice would reduce trade volumes at the US Dollar-dependent (NYMEX) and at the (IPE). A triumphant Iranian bourse would solidify the petro-euro as one more global oil-transaction currency, thus ending the petrodollar's supremacy as the foremost international oil currency.

The international trade of oil in petrodollars has kept the US dollar artificially strong for 30 years, enabling the US to amass vast foreign-funded government debt and trade deficits. Whatever Tehran's motives, we cannot ignore the fate of neighbouring Iraq, which had already begun to trade in eurodollars

Cooking the Books (2)

From workshop to counting house

The demise of Rover - the much-lauded

competition that is built-in to capitalism means there are losers as well as winners - has revived the debate about the decline of manufacturing industry in Britain.

Matthew Parris, the former Tory MP turned journalist, recalled a debate he had last year with fellow Times columnist Anatole Kaletsky:

"I asked whether it really was true that trade balance didn't matter, and manufacturing things didn't matter, any more. Anatole argued that where in the world an item is manufactured is unimportant as long as we get the profits. I think Anatole won that debate" (Times, 9 April).

The "we" in question of course is not the wage and salary working class living and working in Britain but the British capitalist class. And, from their point of view, Kaletsky was right: all a particular group of capitalists need be interested is the amount of profits they can rake in. But it is still true that without manufacturing - somewhere in the world - there would be no profits to rake in. The original source of all profits is the surplus value produced in that section of the economy that changes the form of material things, and which includes, besides manufacturing proper, agriculture, mining, building and transportation.

Capital invested in other activities such as banking, insurance, buying and selling, advertising, consultancy and the like, which do not produce anything (despite them calling themselves an "industry"), gets a share of the surplus value produced in the productive sector. Basically, rather than productive capitalists investing a part of their capital in financing these activities essential to capitalism as they would otherwise have to, a situation has evolved whereby these activities have been hived off, as it were, to separate capitalists who specialise in them.

The price the productive capitalists have to

before the allied invasion. One of Washington's objectives in Iraq was to install a pro-US stooge government and set up military bases before the onset of peak of world oil production, while at the same time converting Iraq back to the petrodollar, thus frustrating OPEC's desire to begin using the euro as an alternative currency of oil transaction. Indeed, one of the first steps taken by Iraq's provisional government was in returning the country to the \$US oil standard.

Geopolitics

We must also look to US geopolitical strategy if we seek the reason why Iran is seen as a threat. The country, for one thing, is strategically placed, straddling the Middle East and Central Asia and must be at least neutralised if the US is to control the region's oil supplies (it's not so much that the US wants all the oil, rather the US wishes to be in control of its distribution, to whom, and on its own terms).

The US is seriously concerned about



Sweatshops - sewing what others will reap

pay for not having to be their own bankers, insurers, sellers, advertisers, etc is that they have to share some of their surplus value with the capitalists with money invested in these activities. This comes about, as Marx explained in the first part of Volume III of Capital, more or less automatically through competition amongst capitals to obtain the best rate of profit resulting in all capitals tending to receive the same rate irrespective of whether the activity in question is directly productive of surplus value or not.

This is the sense in which Kaletsky is right when he said that "where in the world an item is manufactured is unimportant as long as we get the profits". The dominant section of the British capitalist class and its stewards, the government of the day, has decided to go along with the economic trend for the manufacture of certain goods to be transferred, because of lower production costs, to Asia or South America, and to get its share of the surplus value produced there by concentrating on providing services at world level that are essential to capitalism but intrinsically non-productive, mainly in the fields of banking and consultancy. It's a sign that we are already living in one world from an economic point of view.

The decline of manufacturing in Britain means a change in the composition of the working class here but it does not mean that those working in the non-productive sector of the economy are not exploited. They are, to the extent that they are paid less than the share of world surplus value their work procures for their employers.

the onset of peak oil production (which experts say will come within ten years), that extant reserves will probably be gone within thirty years, and that long before that time China will have the same oil demands as the US. China is already securing long-term oil contracts with Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Venezuela, seeking out oil contacts via Canada and has previously, somewhat audaciously, made a bid for the US oil company Unocal. It is thus imperative for US capitalists that a rising competitor - China, itself the world's chief consumer of grain, meat, steel and coal - is prevented from gaining a tighter stranglehold on world resources. The two countries may appear to be on friendly terms, but both are jockeying for position in expectation of a showdown.

For US capitalism, there is much at stake. Should China grow in economic strength, sell off its dollar holdings, US world domination will be threatened. Therefore, to protect future US global resource flows, Iran has to be warned by US gangster imperialists - don't mess with our interests; don't run a racket on our turf without our permission; don't deal with another mob.

Preparations to threaten, and if necessary, attack Iran are well under way. In June of last year, Israel took delivery of almost 5,000 "smart bombs" from the United States, bombs capable of penetrating six-foot concrete walls such as those that could well encase Iranian nuclear installations. There have also been numerous reports of clandestine US reconnaissance missions inside of Iran, and of US spy drones violating Iranian air space.

As we approach the final year of Bush's 'Five-year plan', expect war threats in the Middle East to feature prominently in the headlines of the world's press. We hope we are wrong - for the sake of the hundreds of thousands of workers that would die as a result of a US attack upon Iran - about war actually breaking out but history shows that where the interests of mega-business are threatened, spilling blood is of no consideration. ■

Further info available at:
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CLA410A.html>

<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article8354.htm>

<http://amin.org/index.html>

JOHN BISSETT

The Socialist Standard



Everyone's reading it



From left: measuring the physical development of the future workforce in the 19th century; school dinners helped feed them up for war. A typical modern school canteen, and its patrons in the classroom. Inset: school dinners providers Scolarest

Let them Eat School Dinners

A lot of people were happy, or at least hopeful, about the TV series *Jamie Oliver's School Dinners*. To begin with there was the famous chef himself, whose on-screen success persuaded the supermarket giant Sainsburys to go back on their intention of ditching Oliver as the star of their TV ad campaign and instead give him a contract for another series, boosting his pay to £1.2 million. This was because Sainsburys were also happy; while Jamie was lambasting school dinners their sales of organic produce went up by 12 percent a week. Cherie Blair was happy; her opinion of the dinners her son Leo eats at school was: "They're not terrific, to be honest. I am seriously thinking about sending him with a packed lunch". The teachers had to be happy in view of the evidence - which was available a long time before Oliver got interested in the subject - that nutrition affects a child's behaviour and response to learning. *A study Food For Thought* (2003) by Derek Gillard reported that in 1999 two schools in South London and the Young Offenders Institution in Aylesbury, both behaviour and achievement were better when diets were improved. Finally, Education Secretary Ruth Kelly was happy because, far from being embarrassed by the exposure of dietary deficiencies in the schools, she was able to claim that she had thought of it first, that when she took over at Education one of the first problems she wanted to tackle was that kids were being fed fattening, poisonous rubbish in school.

Advertising

On the other hand there were those who were not happy at what Jamie did. Ex-Education Secretary David Blunkett did not appear to be delighted; in a rare and overdue spasm of less-than-fervent penitence he had to confess that while he was in charge of the schools he "probably" had not done enough to improve the pupils' food. The £280 million promised by Ruth Kelly, perhaps in a flush of pre-election fever, to improve ingredients and staff training, seemed likely to provoke stresses

among local and national government about who would have to make that kind of investment. Then what about the companies who make some of the food, like the infamous Turkey Twizzlers and Fish Portholes? Firms like Bernard Matthews, whose persistent catch phrase is "They're Bootifool", would not have welcomed the vengeful threat to their access to that bountiful market of under-nourished children.

Just how bountiful can be gauged by the money poured into advertising by the food industry. In 2001 nearly £200 million was spent on promoting chocolate, sweets and crisps - some of which presumably went to ex-football star Gary Lineker for his role advertising Walkers Crisps. In 2002 McDonald's advertising bill came to £42 million, including payments to Alan Shearer - another football hero - for his appearance in their TV campaign. And then there were the firms who prepare and dish out those awful school dinners; they were unhappy about the threat to their contracts with local education authorities and some of them made it clear that they were not about to surrender their rights without a fight. One of these is a company called New Schools but

"companies fight to safeguard their profits at the cost of malnourishing school kids"

they do not actually get to heating the burgers or cooking the Turkey Twizzlers because they have sub-contracted it to another company called Atkins Asset Management, who in their turn have sub-contracted it to an outfit called Scolarest.

Protest

The *Guardian* of 25 April reported on a protest about the food supplied by Scolarest

in the London Borough of Merton. Scolarest claimed they had not had any complaints about the food and warned that any schools trying to opt out of their contracts may have to pay the equivalent of a year's profit as compensation. Meanwhile angry and anxious parents were in no doubt about the quality of what Scolarest supplies. One mother wrote to the newspaper that her children "have rarely eaten school dinners at their Merton school because of the poor quality of the contracted-out, underfunded provisions" and a teacher at Merton, who has three sons at schools there, said "the unbalanced diet in our schools is affecting the health of our children now and will change their health for years. They deserve better". Unhappily, the protests were energised by the assumption that food is produced and processed - by Scolarest, McDonalds or whoever - in order to nourish people. That is a nice idea but it does not fit in with the logic of capitalism's priorities. "For contractors," said the MP whose constituency includes Merton, "what matters is the bottom line".

An official concern over standards of childhood nutrition is not new. A particular incentive to tackle the problem was the fact that over a third of the volunteers to join the Army in the Boer War were too small, undernourished or sick to be allowed to take part in that imperialist enterprise. This was serious, as it cast doubt on how British capitalism would fight its future wars of which, it was assumed, there would be many. Better, ran the reasoning, to start feeding the children now. The advent of compulsory education was another spur to action; in 1889 the London School Board set up the Schools Dinner Association which supplied cheap, or in some cases free, school meals. In haste a Committee on Physical Deterioration was established and from that there emerged the 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act, which encouraged local authorities to provide meals at schools, on the well-founded assumption that the children were unlikely to get them at home. The policy was developed between the wars

until the 1944 Education Act set out that every child in a maintained school should be provided with a meal, the full cost of which was met by the state.

Poverty

The 1964 Labour government began the retreat from this high spot in education services in 1967, when they withdrew the 100 percent grant for school meals. In 1978 a White Paper on public expenditure opted for halving the £380 million cost of providing school meals, which led to the lowering of standards and the introduction of junk food. The big assault came with the Thatcher governments, which abolished the statutory duty on Local Education Authorities to lay on meals for all school children and then introduced compulsory competitive tendering. This opened the way for the private companies which, to screw the largest possible profit from the arrangement, introduced the cafeteria system and the provision of junk fast food like burgers and chips. The day of Scolarest had dawned.

The link between nutrition and health and behaviour seems so obvious and the evidence for it seems so overwhelming, that it hardly needs to be established through investigation. Booth and Rowntree surveyed the extent of the deeper levels of poverty in London and York respectively in the late 19th and early 20 centuries but the limits to the usefulness of their work can be gauged by the fact that when Booth began to collect his data he thought the extent of deprivation to be over-estimated and that in any case the condition of many of those in poverty was self-inflicted. The problem today is critical but in many respects different. As Jamie Oliver and many others have found, malnutrition is not always a matter of lack of food but of having access only to food which may be filling but is nutritionally deficient. That is itself related to working class poverty. At a Diet and Health Forum in October 2003 Julia Unwin, Deputy Chair of the Food Standards Agency, said

"Children a century ago were not getting enough of the right things to eat. British children today are eating too much of the wrong things. Within the last month the Health Development Agency has spelled out in chilling detail the scale of the problem we face...And hardest hit are those worst placed to react - children living in socially deprived circumstances. We are talking here about a disease of poverty."

So Jamie Oliver may not have been aware of what he was cooking up, when he set out to expose school dinners on TV. Malnutrition is an aspect of poverty, which is an inescapable reality of capitalism's class society. Food is a commodity - produced for sale and profit - like all of capitalism's wealth. That is why the companies could fight to assert the legal right to safeguard their profits, even at the cost of malnourishing school kids. It is a typically tragic mess of this social system, that children can be starved as they are fed. ■

IVAN

Art in Capitalism and Socialism

Will socialism be a society in which people passively consume rather than actively create art? In a post-capitalist society, will art exist at all?



Above left: modern art at the Tate Modern. Above right: the cathedral-like entrance to the same gallery

The first attempts by early humans, some 35,000 years ago, to represent aspects of their lives through cave paintings show that art served a useful social function, as did the use of early jewellery to enhance sexual attraction. Many of the purposes of art in capitalist and pre-capitalist societies, such as self-expression, beautification, recording history, education, entertainment and social comment, will doubtless exist in socialism, although perhaps not as we now recognise them.

The nature of post-capitalist art has been discussed by Engels, Marx and Morris, to name only three. As an artist himself, William Morris was particularly enthused by this subject. In *Art and Socialism* (1884) he contested that "the greater part of the people have no share in Art" because "modern civilization" had suppressed it. Defining art as "the expression by man of his pleasure in labour", Morris believed that art should be the intrinsic part of the labour process it had been before the capitalist division of labour had divided art from craft, and when craftsmen still worked with a sense of beauty. Socialism would not have art as such but 'work-art', and people would produce objects that were not merely useful, but also had some artistic merit.

Looking at society as it now stands, it is a fact that most children and young people are very creative. For many, childhood will prove to be the most creative time of their lives. As they get older, however, their creative output lessens until by adulthood they engage in few artistic pursuits. Instead of producing art, they

consume it in all its various forms, and some go on to learn skills of appreciation and criticism. Most, after their formal education is complete, rarely put pen to paper, brush to canvas, or whatever. Creativity seems to have withered away, perhaps because after years of secondary schooling when they are prepared for life as an adult worker in capitalism, creating art - unless they intend to become employed as artists - seems to lack purpose. When the young adult emerges from the education system, art is not likely to be pursued for its own sake, for what is to be gained by it? The chances are that the nearest a person may come to creativity is in an art therapy class, when it is used as a form of curative. But once the troubled mind has been soothed, it's back to a life devoid of creativity.

In contrast to this, socialism may prove to be an artistic renaissance in which more people produce more art than in any previous time in history. The things which historically have prevented them creating art will no longer exist: schooling, the art institution's failure to take seriously some forms of art, the art industry's failure to see beyond the profit motive, and people who may think that there is little point creating art unless someone is prepared to cross their palms with silver. But it will not be a renaissance in the style of the 16th and 17th centuries, which was restricted to an artistic and scholarly elite, and which had very little

impact on the vast majority of people. Socialism may generate a workers' art renaissance or, more specific to a classless society, a people's renaissance, at a level which touches everybody and to which no one is denied access. But that does not mean that socialist art will be good art.

The Great and the Good

Art in capitalism has a dualistic nature. On the one hand there are The Greats: the Old Masters, the Pre-Raphaelites, even the Young British Artists, and so on, plus the various schools of art such as Metaphysical poetry, Augustan satire, and Naturalism. These comprise a small minority, but because they constitute an intellectual ruling class their ideas dominate thinking about art and their works are highly revered and among the best-known. Then there is all the rest: the vast

majority of artists and people creating art whose output is either ignored or unrecognised. Because the people who create this art lack the privileges and advantages of the artistic elite, their work is considered substandard, if it is considered at all. It is also unknown to the wider public, or ignored by them, for they have been seduced by the cult of the great artists about whom films have been made, books written and songs sung. Van Gogh (right) is a good example of this (although he achieved nothing like this sort of recognition in his lifetime).



Galleries and museums, or theatres and concert halls, seem more like temples to the idols of art, and the contemplative act of experiencing art almost becomes a form of prayer. In socialism, art will be complementary not competitive. Some artists may acquire small-scale status, but socialism contains no mechanism to allow individual artists to acquire privilege or power. So with no art institution which effectively decides what art is and isn't, and no art industry judging the quality of a work by its cost, people may be encouraged to create art. This art, however, may lack the very high quality of art produced in capitalism. Simply, most post-capitalist art may not be as good as capitalist art. Historically, artists of the greatest skill would be more likely to find patronage and success than those of less talent. Art became conceptualised as an activity of high skill restricted to a few gifted individuals of supreme talent. The art of the overwhelming majority of people, who were equally capable of producing art but who lacked the privileges of the Great Artists and whose work was inevitably of a different standard, became marginalised as rough and ready 'folk art' and not a serious aesthetic form.

It is likely that a post-capitalist society will generate a climate of tolerance and appreciation for art which lacks the skill of The Greats. We may even come to view

their works not as highly capable but as highly compromised, undermined by the need to compete against other artists of equal talent for limited opportunities in a market place, or we may see them simply as expressions of an obsolete system. This does not mean that in socialism people will no longer try to produce works of great quality and indeed some may equal in skill the art of The Greats. The idea of doing one's best will translate into socialism, but how much of the desire to do one's best is generated by the desire to out-do the best of the rival artists and compete for the few opportunities available in a crowded market? So if art in socialism is not as good as art in capitalism then it is not something which should concern us.

Art is an institution as well as a massively profitable industry, worth billions of pounds every year. This institution has a number of functions, none of which would be particularly welcome in socialism, or particularly feasible. Currently, it defines what art is, and consequently blocks what it does not consider to be art. It promotes a cult of the individual artist as gifted genius whose brushes we are not worthy to clean.

It finances profitable art and refuses to finance art from which a profit cannot be realised regardless of its quality or importance. Because the practices it engages in are inherently anti-social, divisive and pro-capitalist, no such organisation could survive the transition from capitalism to socialism. With this removed along with its privileges, then something like folk art or 'people's art' will emerge, that is art created by the average person without state

sponsorship or the support of the institution, and created not for purposes of individual gain or acclaim, but for other reasons such as self-expression, ornamentation, beautification and so on. The person who creates such art may not even be called an artist, for that term signifies a privileged occupation producing nothing of any practical value and necessitating community support. That a person could be only an 'artist' and produce nothing except art seems unlikely and the continuance of such practices into socialism a highly remote possibility. Just as there will be no workers, only people, in a post-capitalist society, perhaps also there will be no 'artists'. Or perhaps in socialism, everyone will be an artist.

In socialism, it is likely that art will be produced for many of the reasons it has always been produced in capitalist and pre-capitalist societies. Socialism will not be a society without emotion and people will still be moved to express themselves in one form or another and art will surely be one of those forms. Socialism will have its problems, although on a massively reduced scale compared to any previous form of society. Conflict between individuals and possibly between communities may exist. As mentioned above, the problems of capitalism have provided no end of material for artists to comment upon, as the

problems of socialism may also do. But socialism will deal fairly and sensibly with its problems and will not try to disguise them. If any 'unfairness' exists, it will not require a great painting, novel or song to expose it; it will be there for us all to see and deal with. In socialism, it is therefore highly unlikely that art which protests against large-scale social wrongs will exist.

Such works as *Gulliver's Travels*, *A Christmas Carol*, *North and South*, *Grapes of Wrath*, 1984, *Look Back in Anger*, and *Salvador* could not exist in post-capitalist society, for the issues they address equally could not exist. Similarly, there would be no socialist Kitchen Sink Dramas, Mike Leigh or Ken Loach films such as *Cathy Come Home* or *Bread and Roses*, and no Bob Dylans or Woody Guthries. And the sort of science fiction which reflects the fears and paranoias of society by turning hostile countries into hostile planets and suspicious foreigners into aliens would find little purchase in socialism, and such works as *War of the Worlds* would exist only as fantasies that have no connection to the real world. Art which reflects and comments upon alienation, war, competition, injustice and inequality, as all the above do, is ideally suited to a society of alienation, war, competition, injustice and inequality, but not to socialism. It is to be hoped, however, that socialism will produce works of the same intensity, profundity and emotional depth as the ones mentioned above. ■

NEIL WINDLE

Africa: a Marxian Analysis

A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from *The Socialist Standard*. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to:

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Available from **The Socialist Party**, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN £1 (£1.35 by post). Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'

Solidarity for Twenty-Five Years



Cornelius Castoriadis

One of the features of the radical political scene in the 1960s and 70s was a magazine called *Solidarity* which used to publish long and rather boring accounts of factory life and of particular and now long-forgotten industrial disputes. There were also translations of equally long articles by someone identified as "Paul Cardan" (later revealed to be the French intellectual Cornelius Castoriadis) offering a replacement critique of capitalism to that of Marx judged outdated and wrong.

Those behind it had been in the Communist Party and, though for a short while only, in the Trotskyist Socialist Labour League. One of them was Maurice Brinton (also known as Martin Grainger and Chris Pallis), a selection of whose articles over the period 1960 to 1985 has just been published (*For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton*, edited by David Goodway. AK Press. £12), and who appears to have been its leading theoretician. Born in 1923 he died earlier this year.

What characterised *Solidarity* was its complete rejection of Leninism and the concept of the Vanguard Party and its advocacy of Workers Councils (as opposed to parliament as well as the vanguard party) as the way to socialism. In their view, a revolutionary organisation should not seek to lead the working class but simply to be an instrument that workers could use to transform society; at the same time it should try to prefigure in its organisation and decision-making what future society should be like, practising "self-management" and encouraging workers to rely on their own efforts rather than trust in leaders. So, some of what *Solidarity* was saying was more or less the same as we were. For example:

"If the working class cannot come to understand socialism - and want it - there can be no socialist perspective. There can only be the replacement of one ruling elite by another" (March 1969).

"For us, revolutionaries are not an isolated elite, destined to any vanguard role. They are a product (albeit the most lucid one) of the disintegration of existing society and of the growing awareness of what it will have to be replaced by" (February 1972).

"We consider irrational (and/or dishonest) that those who talk most of the masses (and of the capacity of the working class to create a new society) should have the least confidence in people's ability to dispense with leaders" ("As We Don't See It", 1972).

Like us, they mercilessly denounced Leninism, Trotskyism and Vanguardism as not only mistaken but as positively dangerous, as the ideology of a new would-be ruling class based on state capitalism.

There were differences of course,

particularly over Workers Councils as opposed to Parliament as well as over the continuing relevance of Marx's analyses and over the content of a socialist society. Because we saw the basic division in capitalist society as being between owners and non-owners we saw common ownership, and the consequent disappearance of buying and selling, money and the market, as a necessary feature of socialism. *Solidarity* was not so clear on this. Following Castoriadis it saw the basic division in capitalist society as being between order-givers and order-takers and so the basic feature of future society as being "self-management" (which would of course be one such feature, what we call "democratic control"). From this angle, the disappearance of money and the market was regarded as secondary: whether or not to use them being a mere policy option open to those around at the time. This became clear in the translation published in 1972 under the title *Workers' Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society* of a long article by Castoriadis, written in 1957, which was basically a blueprint for the workers self-management of a market economy.

Brinton was aware that this was controversial and in the introduction (reproduced in this book) he wrote (in a thinly disguised reference to us) that "some will see the text as a major contribution to the perpetuation of wage slavery - because it still talks of 'wages' and doesn't call for the immediate abolition of 'money'".

He was right. Some did, and not only us. Such "councilism" (management of a



Brinton's 'For Workers' Power'

market economic by workers' councils, which we denounced as "workers' self-exploitation") led to the breakaway of groups which later became the "left communist" CWO and ICC of today, which despite their partial return to Leninism, at least adhered to the view that socialism/communism had to be a moneyless, wageless society.

This, in fact, is not the only place where Brinton looked over his shoulder at us. As early as 1961 he was explaining that "whilst rejecting the substitutionism of both reformism and Bolshevism, we also reject the essentially propagandist approach of the Socialist Party of Great Britain", a theme he returned to in 1974 in a review of a book on the sexual revolution which advocated achieving this through education: "to

confine oneself to such an attitude would be to restrict oneself to the role of a sort of SPGBer of the sexual revolution".

In fact, in his two main writings, both published in 1970, *The Irrational in Politics* and *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control* he felt the need to have a go at us. In the former he suggested that the *Socialist Standard* only discussed economic and political topics and ignored the problems of everyday life (not true as a look through the issues of the time will show). In the latter he wrote that we, like some anarchists, took the view that nothing particularly significant had happened in 1917: "The SPGB (Socialist Party of Great Britain) draw much the same conclusion, although they attribute it to the fact that the wages system was not abolished", adding in a wild caricature of our position "the majority of the Russian population not having had the benefit of the SPGB viewpoint (as put by spokesmen duly sanctioned by their Executive Committee) and not having then sought to win a Parliamentary majority in the existing Russian institutions". Of course, our analysis was much deeper than that.

To be quite honest such criticisms did find some echo amongst some of our members in the 1970s who eventually got themselves expelled for publishing material advocating workers' councils rather than parliament as the way to socialism. But this was later to cause a problem for Brinton and *Solidarity* since the ex-SPGBers in question became the "Social Revolution" group which, as Goodway records in his introduction, merged with *Solidarity* to become "Solidarity for Social Revolution". For all their other disagreements with us, these ex-members still retained the conception of socialism as a moneyless and wageless as well as a classless and stateless society, and insisted on the new merged group adopting this position. Brinton eventually went along with this, though reluctantly, and afterwards revealed (see his 1982 article "Making A Fresh Start") that he regarded this merger - which didn't last - as bringing to an end *Solidarity's* golden age of 1959 to 1977. Ironically, something seems to have rubbed off on him, as the last-dated article in this collection (from 1985) ends:

"A socialist society would therefore abolish not only social classes, hierarchies and other structures of domination, but also wage labour and production for the purpose of sale or exchange on the market".

Brinton is a good writer, so this book reads well and stands as a record of one strand of radical thinking in the 1960s and 70s. It goes well with the part of our own centenary publication *Socialism Or Your Money Back* that also reproduces articles from this period. ■

ADAM BUICK

25th Century Capitalism

Capitalism. By Victor D. Lippit.
Routledge Frontiers of Political Economy. £65.

Lippit's main theme is that capitalism - as a system in which "a portion of the profits reaped through the sale of goods and services is reinvested, swelling the capital stock, incorporating new techniques in the process, and permitting larger sales and profits in the future" - could well continue for another three and four hundred years but that it will ultimately prove incompatible with human life on Earth. This is because its dynamic of continuous expansion and accumulation will come up against the fact that the Earth's resources and capacity to reabsorb waste are finite. This, according to him, is the basic contradiction of capitalism, not anything within its own economic mechanism or social relationships.

Lippit argues that up to now capitalism has always been able to overcome periods of slump and stagnation resulting from profits falling or markets shrinking. Such periods have always proved to be temporary and in time have always been overcome by the emergence of new favourable social, political and economic conditions for capital accumulation. Much of the book is devoted to describing what these have been over time in America, Europe and Asia. He expects this pattern to be repeated in the future and sees no internal economic or social contradiction within capitalism that will prevent it continuing for centuries. In fact, he expects it to do so. Meanwhile the global environment will continually deteriorate until human life as we know it becomes impossible (he speculates that, with the ozone layer destroyed, humans may have to live and work underground).

It's a pessimistic scenario, but how realistic is it? We ourselves have long held the view that capitalism will never collapse of its own accord for purely economic reasons and that it will continue to go through its cycle of booms and slumps until the working class put an end to it. So, in theory, capitalism could indeed continue for centuries. Obviously, we don't think it need do, or will, since we think that the class struggle between workers and capitalists built in to capitalism will lead to the workers putting an end to it before then. Lippit says that this is utopian as workers, and even the destitute populations of the Third World, will continue to support capitalism as long as it continues to improve their living standards, however slowly (as he thinks it will). The crunch will only come, he contends, when capital accumulation, and the slow long-run improvement in living standards it brings, will no longer be possible for ecological reasons but that this won't be for several centuries.

So what are we supposed to do in the meantime? And what sort of system will then replace capitalism? Lippit's view is that, when the time comes, capitalism will have to be replaced by "a social formation that is consistent with a modified stationary state", by which he means one with stable population, production and consumption levels. This implies "first and foremost", he

says, that "production must be undertaken for the use values it affords, rather than for profit".

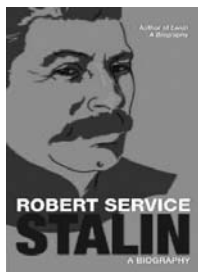
"The focus of innovation would be on minimizing throughputs rather than on maximizing output. The point would not be to bring an end to scientific creativity and innovation, but to channel it in directions that maintain and hopefully improve the ecological balance on which the maintenance of human life depends".

We would argue that this "social formation" could only be one based on the common ownership of the Earth's productive resources, natural and industrial, by the whole of humanity, i.e. world socialism, for how could production be re-oriented towards use instead of profit unless the means of production had first ceased to be the exclusive property of individuals, corporations or states? But we don't see why humanity has to wait till capitalism has nearly destroyed the planet to institute this. It could be instituted now, so avoiding not only the environmental degradation that will occur if capitalism continues for another three or four centuries but also all the wars and the destruction and misery they bring that will occur during this period too; at the same time, world hunger could be eliminated much more quickly within this framework than Lippit thinks will eventually happen under capitalism.

ALB

The Life of Uncle Joe

Stalin: a biography. Robert Service. 528 pages. Macmillan. £25. ISBN 033726278



Service deliberately, and bravely, tries to dig for the true story of Stalin's life beyond the hagiography or demonography that usually represents him.

He presents the case that Stalin, or Joseph Dzughashvili, or Soso, or Koba - as he

was variously known - was a central character in the pre-revolutionary Bolshevik party. He was keen acolyte of Lenin, a hardman - he organised the campaign of bank robbery and extortion in the Caucasian areas of the Tsarist empire at Lenin's behest, even when the latter promised to cease such activities. He edited Pravda, was on the Bolshevik central committee and was Lenin's close collaborator on the 'National Question'.

He was imprisoned several times, and though taciturn with fellow prisoners, he took his beatings at the hands of prison guards with equanimity. During the civil war, he commanded the Red Army on the south fronts, where he proved to be a ruthless if not effective commander.

So, hardly the grey man Trotsky liked to pretend him to be - but Trotsky could hardly criticise Stalin for brutality, when he was as nearly as ruthless. In fact, Service makes a good case that Stalin rose to power as part of a stop-Trotsky faction.

Stalin was able to present himself as the acme of Leninist orthodoxy, and possibly - and Service does make this case - believed he really was creating some form

of socialism in the Soviet Union. Socialists - unlike Leninists - have no need to shy away from this fact. Our argument never was that Stalin was a bad man, a monster (although, obviously, he was) but that he was acting upon a false and dangerous theory - that a band of dedicated leaders could force the world to socialism.

Service makes clear that much of Stalin's apparent paranoia was based on the simple fact that he and his fellows had risen to power suddenly and almost out of nowhere against the might of Tsarism. He believed, apparently, that a similar cabal could unseat him - what comes round goes around.

His callousness was relentless, ranging from bullying subordinates at informal parties, to personally poring over the list of names and faces of victims of his terror. Service alleges a desire to be at the centre of things, to assert himself that grew from childhood and was fostered by his membership of the Bolshevik party. As he notes, Stalin was among the few genuinely working class members of the inner sanctum of the party - which goes to show that having genuine workers in charge doesn't make that much difference.

In his desk, when he died, were some keepsakes - a letter from Bukharin begging to know why he Stalin wanted to murder him when he was already politically dead, and a letter from Tito, threatening to try and assassinate him if he didn't stop trying to bump the Yugoslav dictator off - as Service notes, one gangster to another. Even his intimate moments were blood-soaked and ruthless.

This is a tidy account of the life of a utopian who thought that through ruthless will alone he could shape the world. As in some parts of his former empire, his statues are being resurrected and his reputation repaired, it also serves as a timely warning against leaders past, present and future.

PS

Film Review

Indictment of Global Capitalism

Darwin's Nightmare



On an elevated plateau in western Africa's Great Rift Valley lies Lake Victoria, the source of the River Nile and the second-largest freshwater lake in the world. The lake supports hundreds of animal species found nowhere else on earth - or at least it did up until the 1960s, when commercial fishermen introduced the Nile perch, in an attempt to improve fishing yields. The Nile perch is a voracious predator and within years had completely wiped out many of the native species.

Almost as devastating has been the effect on the local human population, which is among the highest-density in the world. With the decline of indigenous fish stocks and the population explosion of the Nile perch, many of the millions of Africans who live and work around Lake Victoria have been displaced from their traditional

farming and fishing occupations. Out of economic necessity, they have been forced to accept positions as wage-labourers for large-scale Nile perch fisheries and packing plants. Meanwhile, processing of the invasive perch, whose flesh is much oilier than those of native species, has led to an increase in demand for firewood to dry the meat. This has resulted in widespread deforestation and the pollution of Lake Victoria from runoff.

This sorry state of affairs is chillingly documented in *Darwin's Nightmare*, which premiered at the 2004 Toronto Film Festival and is now gradually seeing wide release across Europe. Director Hubert Sauper presents us with contrasting images to reinforce the human devastation of the fishing communities in and around the Tanzanian city of Mwanza. We are taken inside the booming fish processing factories, where 500 tons of Nile perch are filleted and packed for export to Europe every day; meanwhile, two million Tanzanians find themselves gripped by a deadly famine. We see fishermen and prostitutes wasting away from AIDS; the local Christian clergy, steadfast in their religious superstitions on sex, refuse to advocate the use of condoms. An animatronic fish in a fat factory owner's office croons out "Don't Worry Be Happy" while the starving street-children outside come to blows over the apportionment of a meagre can of rice. Those who failed to snatch a handful assuage their hunger by melting down and inhaling the plastic material the factory uses to package its fish.

Perhaps the most memorable and horrific scene in the movie comes after Sauper interviews a factory official on a balcony overlooking the premises. The camera pans across the grounds and focusses on a rickety truck being loaded up with fish offal. "Don't film that truck," barks the official. Some days later, though, Sauper secretly follows the truck to a dirty, stinking landfill where its foul cargo is dumped. The air is thick with the ammonia of decaying fish, and hordes of maggots feast upon the rotting carcasses. A group of mud-caked women, crippled and sick from years of breathing the noxious fumes, crowd around the pile of offal the truck has left behind and get to work. Every scrap of fish - no matter how badly decomposed, muddy, or maggot-infested - is carefully collected and hung up to dry on densely-packed wooden frames. The factory-processed perch fillets are beyond the means of most Tanzanians to buy, so millions must instead subsist on this decaying factory refuse.

Impressively, Sauper does not single out any one person or group of people as evil-doers - not even the factory owners. Rather, the interviews and scenes depicted in the film lead the viewer to the inevitable yet unspoken conclusion that the capitalist system of exploitation itself is the culprit. "[W]herever prime raw material is discovered, the locals die in misery, their sons become soldiers, and their daughters are turned into servants and whores," writes Sauper on the film's website (<http://www.coop99.at/darwins-nightmare/>). "It seems that the individual participants within a deadly system don't have ugly faces, and for the most part, no bad intentions."

If the film has any fault, it is that it offers no solution to the problems it documents. Sauper is not at all optimistic:

"The old question, which social and political structure is the best for the world seems to have been answered. Capitalism has won," he writes with a depressing air of finality. In doing so he parrots the old social-Darwinist attitude that class society is merely "survival of the fittest" as applied to economic competition between individuals, and that capitalism is the natural order of things. It is a discredit to Sauper's talents as a researcher and observer of human behaviour that he has no retort to this untenable point of view.

Despite the filmmaker's pessimism, the documentary itself stands up well on its own as a merciless indictment of global capitalism. After watching *Darwin's Nightmare*, anyone who professes to see no causal relationship between capitalism and the poverty of Africa will be forced to think again.

Tristan Miller

Obituary Benon Mutungi

Fellow comrades, we in the World Socialism Movement Uganda Group, bring to you the bad news of the death of comrade Mutungi. Comrade Mutungi Benon died on Saturday 7 May, a week after having sustained neck spine injuries in a motor accident.

I knew Benon Mutungi as early as at the age of eleven when we were in primary three (1974). At that young age his character was already formed. He was outrightly courageous, brilliant, honest and a generous pupil. This has been his character all through his life.

We later joined the same secondary school and later joined the same university - Makerere University. In 1986 in the year he joined university, he fell sick. He could not continue his studies for a period of seven years. After this break he went back to University to pursue his studies and finished his course (Bachelor of Arts, Geography) excellently. He was called back and did a masters degree.

Comrade Mutungi joined the WSM Uganda in 2000 after having been reading socialist literature for several years. He was an active comrade in most of our activities. He started the "socialist phone-in programme" on the FM Radio in this town of Kabale, writing to the main two Uganda's leading newspapers, advertising in the papers the case for socialism, lending out socialist literature and distributing leaflets, debates and many forms of activities. On return from Ireland for a second masters degree, he was requested to work as Assistant Secretary of the WSM Uganda group, a job he took over enthusiastically.

Benon died at the age of 41. He leaves a widow and four children aged 9, 7, 4 and nine months respectively. In his own words at his death bed Mutungi had this to say: "I don't think the Uganda government I know has ever made it a priority to invest in medical equipment to sustain the lives of Mutungi cases. Unless such equipment has been brought into the country a few days ago. What worries me is leaving the world still insane and worst of all leaving my very young children in such an insane world".

Mugyenzi Ishmael.
Secretary WSM Uganda Group.

Fifty Years Ago Prisoner's Story

In the summer of 1953 Rupert Croft-Cooke, a novelist by profession, was arrested on a charge of homosexuality. A few months later he appeared before the Quarter Sessions at Lewes, was found guilty on some charges and not guilty on others, and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. Apart from a few days at Brixton he served out his sentence (actually six months, allowing for remission) in Wormwood Scrubs. His book, "The Verdict of You All," is the story of his experiences there.

Rupert Croft-Cooke, to judge by the scraps of personal information scattered throughout his book, has not been too hardly dealt with by life. Well-educated, much-travelled, a lover of things good to eat and drink, he was living a well-ordered and comfortable existence in the Sussex countryside until he was rudely awakened one night by the village policeman and two detectives. These, after due observance of the usual legal ceremonial, took him off to the local police station, and from then on he found himself in a world he had hardly known existed. "The Verdict of You All" records his reactions to, and observations of, this world into which he was so suddenly and so rudely thrown, an alien world inhabited by beings he had heard about only through the crime stories of newspapers, a world a million miles removed from the bright and comfortable surroundings he had been accustomed to enjoy.

To those who cherish comforting delusions about the wonderful reforms that are supposed to have been wrought in our prisons, this book will come as a shock. The tale told by the author is of a penal system grim, drear, unimaginative, mean, and degrading - to prisoner and keeper alike. It tells only of Wormwood Scrubs and Brixton the first a prison for first offenders serving sentences of six months and over, the second for men sentenced to less than six months (. . .)

If it is, in fact, an essentially reliable and authentic account of life as it is actually lived in such prisons today, then it is a downright, uncompromising challenge to all the fine words that have been said about the reforms in our penal system. If it is but half true, it is a grim and sorry reflection on the efforts of those reformers who have laboured over the years to improve conditions in our prisons.

(Article by S. H., *Socialist Standard*, June 1955)



The Antidote to the capitalist media

Socialist Standard

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Meetings

London Branches Dayschool

Saturday 25 June, 11am to 5pm

THE POST-WAR LABOUR GOVERNMENT: HOPE AND DECEPTION

11.00 Welcome. Tea, coffee, biscuits.

11.30 **HOW LABOUR GOVERNED 1945-1951**

Speaker: Steve Trott.

13.00 Lunch break

14.00 **DOUBLE-DEALING DEFENCE: LABOUR AND THE ATOM BOMB**

Speaker: Richard Headicar

15.15 Tea break

15.30 **TONY BLAIR: THE GOD THAT FAILED**

Speaker: Simon Wigley.

Room 11, Friends House, 173 Euston Road (side entrance), NW1. Nearest tubes: Euston, Euston Square.

Manchester Branch Meeting

Monday 27 June, 8pm

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre

'Globalised Capitalism and World Socialism'

Central London

Monday 27 June, 7.30pm

THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN HISTORY NO. 1: THE SPARTACUS SLAVE REVOLT

Speaker: Bill Martin.

Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place, W1 (nearest tube: Marble Arch).

Lancaster Branch Meeting

Monday 6 June 8pm

The Gregson Centre, Moor Lane, Lancaster

What will constitute criminal behaviour in a socialist society?

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Hard work, decency and politicians

Are you decent? Are you hard-working? Do you always play by the rules? If you can tick the "Yes" box in answer to these questions you should be aware that our politicians have it in mind to look after you. Both Blair and Howard are agreed that you are a specially deserving case. In a recent speech Michael Howard told us that the Britain he believes in "will give hard-working families the support they deserve. Those people who play by the rules, pay their taxes, respect others..."

and he complained in the Tory election manifesto that "instead of rewarding families who do the right thing, work hard and pay their taxes, Mr. Blair's government takes them for granted."

This in spite of the fact that Blair has already told the 2004 Labour conference that his government planned to change Britain for better, into a country

"where hard working families who play by the rules are not going to see their opportunities blighted by those who don't." And he followed this up in Labour's manifesto, which he said was

"a plan to improve the lives of hard-working families...(and) building communities strong and safe for those who play by the rules."

But plans to celebrate would be premature. From past experience any promise by a politician to improve your prospects needs to be received warily.

Abbey Bank

When Blair and Howard talk about their ambitions to improve the lot of hard working families they are overlooking the people - there are thousands of them - whose dearest wish is to work hard for an employer but who are denied this on the grounds of profitability. That was the case with MG Rover and with a more recent, less publicised, example of the Abbey Bank. This bank was once the Abbey National Building Society, whose business was locking workers into a lifetime of debt in order to have somewhere to live. They advertised themselves with a catchy jingle about getting the habit for being an Abbey debtor, a slogan about Abbey making life simpler and a comforting logo of a cheery family striding confidently into the future protected by an umbrella in the form of the roof of a house. That was when working for a building society gave someone a job for life, which encouraged them to work that bit harder for their employer.

Then the Abbey National became a bank, which plunged them into a savagely competitive industry where they found it hard to survive, let alone prosper. The hoped-for remedy was to be taken over by the Spanish bank Santander, who took a more robust view of the processes of employment and the reasons for people working for them - and presumably of the complacent delusions fostered by that advertising jingle and the company logo. A principal concern for Santander was their new acquisition's cost/income ratio, which persuaded them that there had to be some economies. These involved getting rid of a few thousand employees, which must have dissolved a lot of ideas about the bank being a kind of charity.

Originally Santander intended to cut about 3,000 jobs but recently their boss, Francisco Gomez-Roldan, announced that another 1,000 would have to go, which may not be the end of the redundancies. The finance services union Amicus angrily described the sacking as "an example of worst practice" but of course right - the right of an employer in the class relationships of capitalism - was on Santander's side. Gomez-Roldan was unmoved. "We want to be a strong competitor" he argued, "We have to manage the cost/income ratio". So a few thousand hard working people, who would like to be allowed to continue in that way, are joining the dole queues. Meanwhile, Santanders' profits rose by 38 percent, to £820 million, in the first quarter of this year. And that logo? It too has been made redundant and is being replaced with another - of red flames - which will soon be on all the country's High Streets.

Deception

Decency is another human characteristic which Blair and

Howard promise to see appropriately rewarded. How do they match up in this? Howard was one of the more prominent figures in the Tory governments of the 1980s and 1990s and during that time he did not amass a reputation for fastidious devotion to the truth. After the defeat of the Major government in 1997 he languished in comparative obscurity until the final months of Iain Duncan Smith's disastrous leadership. As desperate Tory MPs began to manoeuvre to get rid of Duncan Smith, Howard was asked whether he would be willing to stand for the leadership. His reply was an emphatic "no," saying that he could not imagine any circumstances, even if Duncan Smith resigned, in which he would be a candidate. Soon after that Howard was engaged in a conspiracy with other Tory leaders to nominate him and, circumventing the rule which laid down that the leader must be elected by the party membership, ensure that he got the job because he was the only candidate. This gave the Tories in Parliament the leader they wanted and avoided another Duncan Smith experience but it was an example of dishonest political manipulation.

Lies and inconsistency were an important issue in the last election, largely centred on Tony Blair and his deceptions over Iraq, tuition fees and the like. At a post-election meeting of Labour MPs Glenda Jackson recounted a common experience: "I was told on the doorstep time and again that they cannot vote for me while Tony Blair remains leader". But this kind of attack on the leadership concealed the fact that among the doubters in the Labour Party there was considerable inconsistency, not to say deceit. Let us take the example of Tony Benn, who for a long time has claimed to be the passionate, undying defender of true Labour Party values. Last December he was, as expected of him, complaining that the Iraq war was based on "a blatant lie about Saddam's possession of WMD" and he described the war as "deeply immoral and unwinnable". Again as expected of him, he has consistently attacked Labour's "shift, by stealth, towards privatisation in health, housing and education". These doubts should be enough to persuade anyone to leave the party and go into opposition against it. But when the election came Benn proved how adaptable his principles are, by telephoning wavering Labour voters to forgive and forget and get down to the polling station and vote for another period of Blair government, with its wars, its privatisation, its lies. "I am supporting Labour candidates up and down the country" was how he airily put it.

Coercion

In February 2002 Transport Secretary Stephen Byers had to apologise for telling a lie on TV about his responsibility for sacking his press chief Martin Sixsmith. Byers' indefensible deception was justified by the then Education Secretary Estelle Morris by a peculiar, but convenient to Blair's Labour Party, definition of a lie:

"It (Byers' lie) wasn't an attempt to deceive - he couldn't possibly have thought that people wouldn't have known...What I call a lie is when you say something to somebody and hope to get away with it because they won't find you out."

That feeble and transparent attempt at propping up the unsupportable was all the more remarkable because of Morris' reputation as an unusually honest politician, the woman who later resigned from her Cabinet job admitting that "I just don't think I am as good at it as I was at my last job" and who did not stand at the last

election because she could not endure the high profile media scrutiny. In that sense she was an exceptional presence in the political jungle but in another - her readiness to excuse and encourage blatant deception - she was completely typical.

The "hard work" and "decency" we are supposed to conform to and the "rules" we are driven to keep are fashioned by the needs of this class society in which privilege exists by virtue of minority ownership of the means of life. That system of property rights is supported by its "rules" - a huge complex of coercive laws and punishment - which defines concepts such as "hard work" and "decency". Political leaders like Blair and Howard work to justify that coercion and to encourage the working class - the voters - to acquiesce in its continuation. But they could not do that through any clear and consistent statement of reality; to justify the capitalist system relies on a repetition of false arguments. So the politicians who manage capitalism impose on the workers their own flexible interpretation of the rules. They need to lie, to evade, to conceal, to manipulate, because they could not do their job, at which they are notably hard-working, in any other way. ■

IVAN



When is a lie not a lie? Er...



A Money Saver

To mark the retirement, at 92 years of age, of Sir Richard Doll, one of the scientists who helped to propagate the connection between lung

cancer and smoking, *The Observer* Magazine (24 April) ran an article on the subject. It recalls that Doll's report of 1956 met a very unenthusiastic response from the government. "The Department of Health considered the report for a year. "They set up an inter-departmental committee to advise on what should be done", Professor Doll recalls. "This said - and I've seen the report - that it should be very serious if smoking was reduced, not because tax would decrease, but because they like people to die off at 65 to save their pensions." Could the cynicism of the ruling class's lackeys be more obvious? Their idea of the perfect worker is one who left school at 15 years of age, worked for 50 years, two nights and a Sunday overtime and the day he was due to collect his old age pension dropped dead in the Post Office.

Money Making Kills

A couple of workers, one from Invergowrie and one from Fife died in a horrific "so-called" accident. They died trying to get a couple of bob for their wives and kids. They died on an off-shore "accident". Here is what the regional officer of Amicus, the trade union had to say: "In March 2003 myself and another official put a complaint in about the lack of maintenance on Shell's Brent Charlie and Delta platforms. The Health and Safety Executive then stated in August 2003 that there was no immediate risk. Three weeks later, two guys were killed." *The Times* (28 April). We should mention that Shell were fined £900,000 for negligence, although as the

TU official mentioned, "In just an hour Shell will have made more than what they were fined." But, what about the guys that died, and what about their families?

Told you, didn't we?

After all the nonsense about "weapons of mass destruction" and "regime change", the real reason for the conflict in Iraq has emerged. It is interesting to note that when Gordon Brown eventually came clean. *The Guardian* was not shocked or indignant, but could make a feeble joke about the deception. "Speaking on BBC1's Breakfast programme about the war in Iraq, Gordon Brown said the government had done what it thought was best for Britain. 'We believed we were making the right decisions in the British national economic interests,' the Chancellor added. So was Michael Moore right that it was all about oil? Or is the city commodities market going heavily into date and palm-nut futures?" *The Guardian* (4 May).

Our Betters (1)

Here are a couple of examples from the same newspaper of how the owning class live. "In a nation (India) where the average income is still less than



853 years to buy this, provided the Indian doesn't spend anything on food meantime

£300 a year, Rolls Royce

has opened a dealership to sell its £256,000 Phantom car after an absence of more than half a century." ... "Princess Michael of Kent, the loose cannon of the Royal Family, has fired another embarrassing salvo, this time claiming she may leave Britain and that life is too boring now foxhunting is banned. The news that she dreams of moving to France where hunting is legal, will

doubtless delight critics of the gaffe-prone Princess, who once allegedly told a group of noisy black diners in a New York restaurant to "go back to the colonies" *The Times* (9 May). Off to France are you sweetheart? Bon voyage, Princess.

Our Betters (2)

The owner of British Home Stores has a reason to celebrate - it is his son's bar mitzvah, so he doesn't want to look penny-pinching. "Phillip Green, the wealthiest and quite probably the most flamboyant man in British retailing history, has flown more than 200 guests to the south of France for his son's bar mitzvah" *The Times* (14 May). According to their report Mr Green will spend about £4 million on the bash. We reckon that this is considerably more than the salesgirls in British Home Stores will spend on their nights out in a lifetime of toil in his stores, but then Mr Green has a reputed fortune of £3.3 billion. We imagine that this is a great deal more wealth than his minimum, or slightly above it, wage earners have managed to accumulate. There are many aspects of capitalism that make us vomit, this is one of them. Another is that he has engaged Beyonce and Destiny's Child to perform at the shindig. Serves his son right, at least his daddy's wage slaves would have shown better taste.



Free lunch



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Showbiz and Poverty
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Anti-capitalists
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Labour Wins, 1945

Vultures at Gleneagles

The G8 comes to Edinburgh



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"repeated demonstrations do little more than confirm the continuity of the system. The point is to change society, not to appeal to the doubtful better nature of its power structures."

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Thieves Kitchen at Gleneagles

This month the world's most powerful politicians are getting together in Gleneagles to discuss how best to exercise their power. Two thousand years ago, in 60 BCE, the three most powerful men in Ancient Rome - Crassus, Caesar and Pompey - met to form a shadow government, one which recognised the reality of their personal power as opposed to the nearly defunct formal constitution of the Republic; in much the same way as the Titanic recognised the iceberg's right of way. Known as the First Triumvirate, it wasn't to last - power cannot work against the logic it's based on; so the rulers of Rome were impelled into a civil war they didn't want because the needs of their camps demanded it.

Now, the G8 has a similar function to this ancient pact: the open and honest rule of the most powerful states beyond the formal international equality and niceties of the United Nations or the World Trade Organisation. The G8, a self-selected club of the richest countries in the world, co-operating together on trade related issues: an open acknowledgement of the golden rule - them as have the gold rule. Unlike the WTO or the UN, it is not an international bureaucracy, but an opportunity for the leaders of the powerful states to meet and discuss policy - a caucus rather than a conference.

It is hopeless to imagine, as some more soppy minded followers of Blair and Brown do, that the G8 can be turned into a force for good in the world. As the most powerful figure in the G8, the President of the United States has shown, the self-

interest of the powerful comes first.

He won't agree to Brown's proposed International Finance Facility, because it doesn't fit with America's plans. Although Blair's Big Idea - for want of a better term - in international politics is that "our"



values can coincide with "our" interests, the reality often is that the values are the garnish to the capitalist feast.

Nor, though, can chanting like plebeians voicing their views in the Forum be of much help. There can be no doubt that in the current world order, the reality is that what these ultra wealthy and ultra powerful states want will happen. They each have the men, the guns and, by Jingo, the money too. Any hope that they will give any attention to the hoi polloi, other than fobbing them off, is a barren one. Business as usual is their god.

Within nation states - where the ruling class is cohesive, their interests similar and where they have to rely on workers administering their interests - political democracy can function and the rule of law have some footing. Politicians and administrators can be and are held to

account. Between nation states though, in the murky wild-west of international law, all these constraints are off.

International diplomacy is clandestine, furtive, removed as far as possible from the democratic gaze. The meetings at Gleneagles will be held behind locked doors, far away from the eyes of anyone interested in proceedings, as the eight colossi dicker and bargain the loot of the whole world. In the ancient world, the definition of a tyrant was a ruler who couldn't walk around without bodyguards: the meetings at Gleneagles will be conducted behind an awesome ring of steel and firepower.

If the G8 were smashed, if its meetings did not happen, the mere practicalities of the existence of these hyper-rich states would mean that they would still have to collaborate and co-ordinate their interests. Simply by being in existence, they have an effect on the politics of the world as irresistible as gravity.

Clearly then, the only way to make progress is to remove the obstacle of these powerful camps and end the interests and powerbases they represent. This can only be done by raising a force adequate to resist them - a movement on a global scale, coherent and co-ordinated, so that one day the rulers of the Earth will wake to find our meeting of the workers, a clique 6 billion strong has settled on their doorstep. Our strength won't be military or financial but creative. We have made the world as it is by our labour, and by the light of our industry and reason we will finally dispel the shadow of privilege and power.

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What will Socialist society do with science?

Most people have no direct experience of science, only of the technology that is an almost incidental by-product of it, yet capitalism pours billions into pure scientific research despite the fact that virtually none of it will ever yield a profit. Why? Because the one per cent that does make a profit will pay for the 99 per cent that doesn't. And what will socialism do with pure research? Carry on the same way? Hardly.

The problem with science in capitalism is that scientists have mortgages to pay, so they need to chase funding because they can't afford to work for free. Much of this funding is from military sources, and weapons systems drive so much research that some have even argued that in socialism we would never have invented the computer! Of course this implies that without military needs no other human needs would surface to take science forward, which is plain nonsense. Valve-

Will Socialism be a Gadget Geek's Paradise?

William Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1890) famously describes a deliberately low-tech socialist society in which people have eschewed the benefits of technology and adopted simple ways of doing things, although arguably he cheats by powering his 'force barges' with some mysterious energy source he never explains, thus hiding his technology rather than really abolishing it. Nonetheless, this is unusual in that most portraits of the future, whether socialist or not, depict a society of advanced technological splendour in which all our needs are met by a range of technical apparatuses only a voice-command away. The amount of electronic appliances in the average household now massively outweighs that of fifty years ago, and half a century from now we may shudder at the poverty of gadgetry suffered in the early 21st century. Whilst it is true that all our digital delights are products of capitalism, it is not necessarily the case that a socialist society will produce an equal amount of high-tech gadgetry. Because socialist production will meet real rather than false needs, it could be that socialism might be a low-gadget society.

In 1995 few people were demanding a portable telecommunications device small enough to slip into the pocket. Fewer yet desired one that could take still and moving images and transmit them at light-speed around the world. Once the sine qua non of Yuppies

state computing may have arisen because of a desire to calculate ballistics, but Babbage's original 'computer' was developed to calculate navigation for ships, a distinctly unmilitary application. So what approach would socialist society take to the great scientific project?

Priorities would certainly be different. Drug research, for instance, will not occur in capitalism if the estimated \$800m cost is not likely to be recouped, thus diseases rife in poor countries are overlooked while the top three drug groups by global sales are fat reducers (\$26b), anti-ulcerants (\$24b) and anti-depressants (\$20b) (*New Scientist*, Jan 15, p.41). Similarly, science would no longer be prostrate at the feet of the military. Global military spending for 2004 was \$1trillion. The US spends 40% of this, is home to 5 of the top 6 military corporations (the sixth,

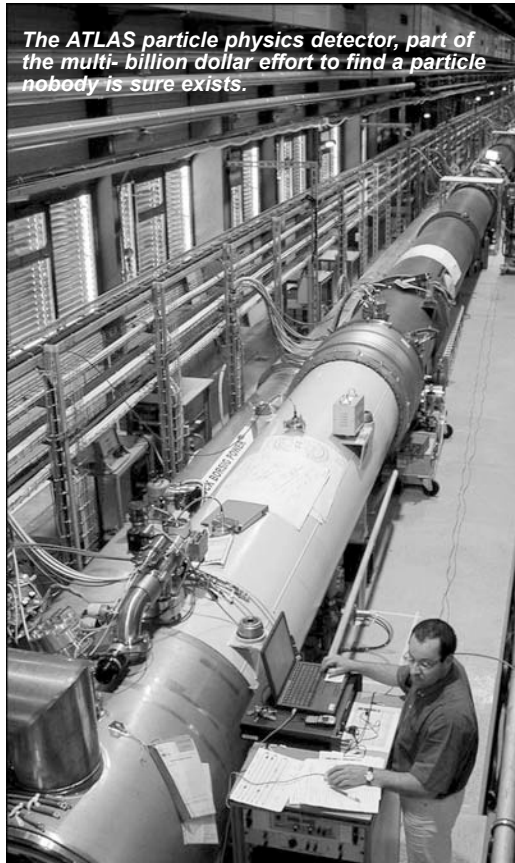
BAE Systems, is in the UK), and is the biggest investor in military R&D (\$62.8b in 2004) while the UK is the second biggest (£2.6b in 2003-4). (*New Scientist*, Jan 22, p.19).

While some other lines of research would probably end, for example cosmetics and cosmetic surgery, including most animal testing which is for this purpose, there would be a clear need for continued work in climatology, energy, epidemiology and many others, but it is questionable whether a socialist community would have the same passion as George Bush to send humans to Mars, or to build space hotels.

In capitalism, science is a huge gamble that only occasionally results in a win, but bets are never placed on research that helps people who can't pay. In socialism, science will still be a gamble, but with the difference that no knowledge thus gained can ever be money lost. It may be that the huge time, resource and work investment in such esoteric projects as Atlas and the Large Hadron Collider, the LIGO gravitational wave detector or the AMANDA neutrino telescope will continue in socialism, but if they do it will be because the population understands and respects scientific enquiry for its own sake, and not because they are expecting to get a new groovy gadget out of it.

What we can say for sure is that curiosity is not likely to be dimmed by some inexplicable post-capitalist apathy in a society that releases scientists as well as all other workers from the compulsion to direct their efforts towards only those endeavours that the capitalist class sees an interest in funding. The freedom from patent and copyright restrictions, which are forms of private ownership and will thus be abolished, will almost certainly unlock a tidal wave of new development which may revolutionise areas of science which are currently at a near-standstill, for instance drug research and computing. In addition, the justifiable fear of what corporations, governments and the military might do with horizon science will no longer hold back developments in gene research and nanotechnology. Lastly, the ending of male domination of science, in which men are four times more likely than women to be scientists (*BBC Online Science*, June 16) will produce a vast influx of new talent and new ideas that can only advance scientific effort for the acquisition of knowledge and ultimately the betterment of humanity.

The ATLAS particle physics detector, part of the multi-billion dollar effort to find a particle nobody is sure exists.



and then the plaything of the young, mobile phones have achieved phenomenal penetration into our lives and our psychologies to the extent that people now look back to those pre-cellular days and wonder how on earth we managed without them. While the same could be said for many other products, mobile phones are unique due to the speed of their success and saturation of the telecommunications market, and the unparalleled innovativeness of their functions and features.

Much of that innovativeness, however, is market-driven, and if your mobile has a built-in video camera it's probably because profit, not patrons, clamoured for it. People's belief that they need a mobile is a telling example of the phenomenon of an artificially created

need, that is, the perceived need for a product stimulated not by genuine necessity but by the manipulation of our psychology by a producer battling for financial success in a competitive market. Although mobile phones, i-Pods, palm-top PCs and so on can satisfy some actual needs, it is mainly sociologically- and psychologically-induced perceived needs they actually satisfy, such as the need for conforming to group norms, the desire for prestige, and the belief that a product brings contentment. And because these items are produced to satisfy manipulated needs, they can have little use value.

So if socialism will be a society that relies far less on gadgets, it is only because it will be a more honest society than the present one, without artificial scarcity or artificial needs.



i-Pod - Peer prestige or practical product?

Talk about socialism

Our recent general election campaign in Vauxhall gave us the chance to talk to more people than usual. There was a well-attended hustings meeting at which our candidate and five of the others put their party's case and answered questions from the audience. On most days we had a literature stall outside our Head Office where we handed out leaflets and spoke to passers-by. We also went to other busy spots such as Brixton and outside tube stations. Sixty thousand copies of the candidate's election address were distributed free by Royal Mail.

If we can be said to have had a slogan for our campaign it was "Vote for yourself - for a change!" Of course it takes more than a slogan to persuade people to change their minds. Capitalism teaches consumers to buy brands of political parties like they buy soap powder. So our refreshing message was that our candidate wasn't going to do anything for them. If they wanted to have their problems solved they would have to do it for themselves.

We had less than two thousand pounds to finance our attempt to increase support for socialism. The supporters of capitalism have countless millions to convince us that theirs is the only game in town. You don't have to be an active supporter of capitalism - or even know what it is - to allow it to go on. Passive, resigned, unthinking acceptance will do nicely.

Anti-capitalism may be a start, but it's certainly not a finish. Real change means we have to be consciously working for something, not simply against something. So we talk to people about socialism and

invite them to tell us whether they think it would mean a better life and society than we have now.

Today things are produced only if someone can see a profit in doing so - no profit, no product. Today there are labour markets: we have to find a job to get money or rely on a meagre state handout - or starve. We are told we must support a hugely wasteful and destructive war industry ("defence") to kill or maim men, women and children in other countries with whom we have no quarrel.

What we said in one of our leaflets applies not just at elections but also between elections. We need a new way of running society based on:

1 The common ownership of all resources by the whole community, not just a rich minority.

2 Democratic control of the community by everyone, without distinction of age, race or sex, instead of rule by unelected company directors or state bureaucrats.

3 Production purely to meet people's needs, not profit.

4 Free and equal access to all goods and services - an end to the market and to money.

No one we spoke to thought that what we were proposing is undesirable, not a good idea, worse than what we have now. Instead we were told it had been tried and didn't work, or that for some reason it would never work. That reason usually turned out to be some variant of our old friend "human nature". People are "naturally" lazy - if they can get away with not working they will do so. People are "naturally" greedy - if they can have things without paying for them they will grab the

lot. People are "naturally" aggressive - without the punitive sanctions of law and order there will be chaos.

Funny how all these nasty features of a supposedly unalterable human nature always apply to other people. When challenged, the amateur experts on human nature never admit to showing those features themselves.

Most work in capitalism is unpleasant or boring because it is in the service of making money rather than something useful. Despite being pitted against each other for jobs generously "provided" by employers, workers do co-operate - nothing would be produced if they didn't. It isn't that the world's poor are greedy - considering the plenty that technology and human ingenuity are capable of producing, they aren't greedy enough!

There is a saying that talk is cheap, and in a sense it is. It costs nothing to talk yourself out of supporting capitalism and into helping to build a practical socialist alternative. And it costs nothing to talk others into following your excellent example.

The result of the election in Vauxhall was: Hoey (Lab) 19,744; Anglin (LD) 9,767; Heckels (Con) 5,405; Summers (Green) 1,705; McWhirter (UKIP) 271; Lambert (Socialist) 240; Polenceus (English Democrat) 221.

We also stood a candidate in the county council elections held the same day, in the Deneside ward in Durham, where the result was: Nugent (Lab) 1921; Nicholson (Con) 361; Colborn (Socialist) 288. ■

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Enfield and Haringey branch. Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.

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Show Biz Re-visits World Poverty

Can Live 8 and the host of attendant charities campaigning this month really make a difference to world poverty?

Make Poverty History" is an imaginative slogan. Who could disagree with the idea of a society in which all people enjoy good health and material security, with all the miseries of world poverty consigned to the past? Sir Bob Geldof is one who believes in such a world and, as a rock performer with credibility, is trying to mobilise millions of like-minded people in great demonstrations aimed at bringing pressure on the G8 governments to assist the desperately poor in the undeveloped countries. If his plans succeed a million people will go to Edinburgh, and added to these will be many more attending concerts in London, Paris, Rome, Berlin and Philadelphia, all to celebrate their solidarity and to make the point that the people of the richest countries should spend more money to end hunger. The aim is also to persuade world leaders to drop third world debt, reform trade laws and double aid to the undeveloped regions.

It is not for socialists to spoil a good party. On the contrary, we can take some heart from these popular demonstrations of care and concern. It would be even more depressing if millions of people were dying every year from easily preventable causes while those better off never gave it a thought. However, this is not the case, so at least there is something reassuring about the willingness and enthusiasm of many people to join together to focus attention on the tragedies of needless death in a world that could so easily provide the good things of life for all.

However, we are bound to ask some critical questions. The staging of pop concerts aimed at making poverty history is beginning to acquire a history of its own. It is twenty years since the first Live Aid Concert was staged at Wembley in 1985 and was thought to be a great success. The aim was to make a difference but what difference did it make?

Reality behind the hype

No doubt in a very minor way the money raised following concerts and channelled through organisations like OXFAM has done a bit of good. But this should be seen against the scale of the problem and whether the actions led by Live Aid, or as it is now called Live 8, in any way address its causes. Over the years, agencies of the United Nations such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation have posted the numbers suffering poverty. For example, in 1975, 435 million people were seriously undernourished. By the year 2000 this had almost doubled to 820 million.

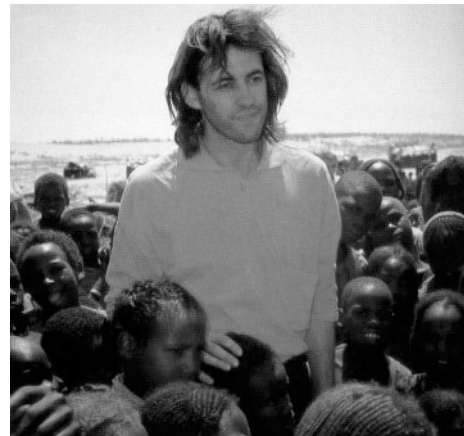
UNICEF states that approximately 40,000 children under five die every day from preventable causes. These figures indicate that since the first Live Aid concert in 1985 the numbers dying from poverty have been increasing horrendously, which leaves little doubt that pop concerts and the charities have made no significant impact on the problem. The grim facts are that the present methods of the "Make Poverty History" campaign stand no chance of ending deaths from hunger. If we are to be serious about stopping this perpetual holocaust, the many thousands of people who support this campaign should have a serious re-think about how best to go about it.

We don't see much by way of analysis, but judged by its methods the "Make Poverty History" campaign appears to think that the fault lies with the developed countries in not cancelling third world debt, not opening up more free trade, and not being more generous in sending money aid to the undeveloped countries, particularly in Africa. However, there is not a shred of evidence that any cancellation of debt will result in improved conditions for workers in Africa. It is claimed that the

"protest tends to set a stage for further protest and further demonstrations"

aim of loans to African states is to improve services such as health and education and build up infrastructures such as communications, port facilities, roads and bridges, etc. In theory these would assist the development of trade with a prospect of raising living standards throughout the continent. A more realistic view is that loans enable Western governments, banks and global corporations to maintain an economic stranglehold on the economies of countries that are rich in resources such as oil, natural gas, gold, diamonds, iron ore, titanium ore, bauxite, timber, rubber, copper and other vital materials.

One example is Nigeria with a population of 135 million, GDP per capita of \$275 per annum, an external debt of \$1.1 billion and producing 750 million barrels of oil per year under the control of global oil companies such as Shell (Anglo Dutch), Exxon Mobil (US), Sasol (South



Africa), AGIP International (Italy), Chevron (US), Total (France), BP (UK), Statoil (Norway).

Angola financed its civil war from profits from the sales of oil and diamonds and also relies on oil-backed loans which now burden the economy with an external debt of \$10.45 billion. Average life expectancy in Angola is 36 years. Its GDP per capita income is \$632 per year. Whilst most of its population suffers the most severe poverty its political rulers benefit from corruption. "The IMF found that between 1997 and 2002 some \$4.22 billion went missing equivalent to some 12 percent of GDP. Angola's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small elite, who often use government positions for massive personal enrichment" (Guardian, 1 June).

The small country of Equatorial Guinea was recently subject to an escapade involving Sir Mark Thatcher who was accused of being part of an intended takeover. It is immensely rich in resources with oil and gas production expected to reach 150 million barrels a year. It carries an external debt of \$248 million. Some international companies reaping high profits include Marathon Oil (US), Exxon Mobile (US), Energy Africa (South Africa), Chevron (US), British Gas (UK).

Marathon Oil operates in Equatorial Guinea on very good terms which may be associated with the benefits its politicians enjoy. "Teodoro Obiang Nguema, the country's president, and his wife and son, were apparently treating themselves to planes, big houses and shopping sprees. Millions of dollars in cash were being lugged around Washington in suitcases" (Guardian, 2 June).

Taking the continent of Africa as a whole the (British) Prime Minister's Commission for Africa "estimated that the amount stolen and now held in foreign banks is equivalent to more than half the continent's external debt of \$300 billion" (Guardian, 3 June).

There can be little doubt that the world we are now describing is one motivated by greed and pursued through a ruthless exploitation of natural and human resources. The main players are governments, multinational corporations and corrupt local politicians running gangster regimes. It may well be that the governments of the G8 will make a gesture that partially cancels third world debt but the write-off of these dollars will only be a means of continuing their grip on African countries whilst dressing their actions with the phoney rhetoric of care and concern.

There will be no outcome that will



Extreme left: Geldof in the eighties during the campaign to end famine in Africa. **Far left :** twenty years later, the campaigns and the famines continue. **Left: The Commission for Africa**

solve the problems of the desperately poor of Africa, and however well meaning may be their slogans, workers in the developed countries should not become involved in the machinations of interest groups whose basic concern is profit and the economic strategies of ruling elites.

Weakness of mere protest

Whilst the G8 protests may demonstrate great strength of feeling they will also demonstrate a great weakness; this is the lack of control of those who take part and their dependence on the decisions and actions of present power structures. Because of this, protesters can become victims of a seductive but deadly process. The capitalist system constantly throws up issues that demand action amongst those who are concerned and by many people who think of themselves as socialists. As a result, protest tends to become a demand for an "improved" kind of capitalism which leaves the long-term reasons for protest intact. This has been the history of protest.

In this sense, protest tends to set a stage for further protest and further demonstrations. Though the issues may vary the message stays the same: "We

demand that governments do this, that or the other!" The spectacle of thousands demanding that governments act on their behalf is a most reassuring signal to those in power that their positions of control are secure. In this way, repeated demonstrations do little more than confirm the continuity of the system. The point is to change society, not to appeal to the doubtful better nature of its power structures.

With Sir Bob as its high priest, we could also think of the Live 8 concerts as homage to the god of money and the illusion that it has powers of action on its own. But the opposite is true. Money is part of a system that prevents us from using our real powers of production for the benefit of all people. Geldof never stops going on about giving more money and this feeds the illusion that without money we have no way to provide for the things we need. This leaves us separated from our powers of action. It ignores the fact that productive resources are not money but labour, land, industry, manufacture, transport and communications. The problems of world poverty require that these should be liberated from the

economic constraints of money and the profit system.

Given that the number of people suffering and dying from the effects of world poverty have doubled over the past 25 years and on any realistic forecast will continue to increase, it should be obvious that we must go far beyond mere protests, organise to abolish the profit system and replace it with a world of common ownership, democratic control and production solely for needs. Such a socialist world would be able to stop people dying from hunger immediately and rapidly increase world food production to reach a point where every person on the planet would have free access to sufficient good quality food to maintain good health. ■

PIETER LAWRENCE



Cooking the Books (1)

The Right to Work All Hours

In 1993 the European Commission proposed that the maximum time that employers could legally make their

employees work should be limited, on average and including overtime, to 48 hours a week.

A quick calculation will show that, for a six-day week, this is the Eight Hour Day, a long-time trade union demand. In Capital (chapter 10 on "The Working Day") Marx quotes a declaration from a General Congress of Labor that met in Baltimore in August 1866 that "The first and great necessity of the present, to free the labour of this country from capitalistic slavery, is the passing of a law by which eight hours shall be the normal working day in all States of the American Union". In fact, May Day was instituted in 1889 precisely to demonstrate for this in all countries.

The Council of Ministers of the Member States of the European Union (the body that makes European laws) did not accept this proposal. While still retaining

48 hours as the maximum that employers could legally require their workers to work, they amended the draft Working Time Directive to allow countries to provide for individual workers to voluntarily waive their legal right not to work more than this. This loophole, inserted at the insistence of the UK minister, came to be known as the "UK opt-out". Which the then Tory government immediately took advantage of.

Since the bargaining strength of workers and employers are by no means equal this made the Directive virtually a dead letter in Britain, with employers making "voluntary" agreement to work longer a condition for being employed or promoted. As Paul Routledge explained in his column in the *Daily Mirror* (13 May):

"Forty per cent of UK firms exploit the opt-out - by 'asking' workers to sign away their rights. Many bosses require staff to accept employment contracts containing an opt-out clause, even though this is illegal. No clause, no job".

When the Directive came up for review in May this year, the European Parliament (which is not a real parliament, more a consultative committee) voted to end the "UK opt-out". Immediately a huge hue and cry was raised by employers' organisations in Britain. "Freedom of

choice" was at issue, said the Director General of the CBI, echoing what employers had said in the 1840s when a timid bill to limit the working day to ten hours had been introduced. It would undermine "competitiveness", said the Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, expressing employers' dislike of restrictions on how long they can get their workers to work, since any limitation could mean they might have to take on more workers, so increasing their labour costs and undermining their competitive position vis-à-vis capitalist enterprises in other countries - such as China, Brazil and India where no such restrictions apply.

And what did the newly-elected Labour government have to say on this? Yes, yes, it would undermine competitiveness, we'll fight to ensure that a maximum 48-hour week is not introduced into Britain, grovelled Industry Secretary Alan Johnston and Employment Minister Gerry Sutcliffe (both of whom had climbed the greasy pole via the trade union movement).

True to their word, they did and won. The Council of Ministers retained the opt-out. Proof if any more were needed (which it isn't) that Labour is not even a "Labour" party.



Clockwise, from left: Edinburgh, site of this month's G8 meeting; 3 of the 8; the fab 2, and Oxfam.

Making Poverty History or Helping Capitalists Exploit Africa?

Is Brown and Blair's noble talk of 100 per cent debt cancellation for the poorest countries more a case of noblesse oblige?

Who is the G8? In a nutshell, it is a clique of the 8 leading industrial States who have appointed themselves rulers of the world.

The G8 leaders are actually the executive of the capitalist class of their respective countries and are the staunchest defenders of neoliberal corporate globalisation, the custodians of privilege and corporate power and the guardians of world capitalism. They help rule the world and maintain the playing field for profit-hungry western corporations. Together they have the power to dictate who eats and who starves, who lives and who dies, to declare war regardless of the wishes of the people who elected them. Their policies have resulted in global poverty and environmental destruction. They are meeting in Edinburgh this July to decide on which international strategies they can commonly pursue, allegedly in the interests of the people of the word and the natural environment.

Lined up against the G8 leaders this July in Edinburgh is the campaign group Make Poverty History, a loose coalition of some 450 NGOs, unions and charitable organisations, united in the demand for fairer trading conditions for developing States, debt cancellation and increased and improved aid.

Oxfam's role

By far the biggest development organisation within Make Poverty History is Oxfam, which has been widely accused of pandering to the whims of New Labour and propagating objectives which are identical to those of a Blair government frantic, in the face of the Iraq fiasco, to implement a foreign policy that campaign movements

can stomach. Indeed, there are individuals and groups associated with Make Poverty History who identify with the objectives of Messrs Blair and Brown. The celebrity Bono, for instance, referred to the smiling duo at the last Labour Party conference as the "Lennon and McCartney" of poverty reduction.

Loud-mouthed celebrity Bob Geldof, a week after Bono's remark, revealed he was backing Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's attempts to deliver development to Africa because of their Christian values. Geldof can well support New Labour and obsessively promote the agenda of the MPH campaign, but you have to begin asking questions when even Blair has been spotted wearing a white Make Poverty History wristband.

The praise is of course reciprocal. On 3 June, Gordon Brown expressed his support for Sir Bob the Gob's Live8 concerts and encouraged demonstrations at the G8 summit, as long as they take the form of a "peaceful march". Any other government would have feared a march by one million demonstrators, but not New Labour. Blair and Brown are so happy with the convergence of their own overseas agenda and the demands of the Make Poverty History campaign that they rather see a million person march as being a rally in support of Labour Party policies.

Chancellor Gordon Brown is nowadays advised on international development by former Oxfam trustee and former director at the US bank UBS Warburg, Shriti Vadera, and Blair has the backing of Justin Forsyth - one time Director of Policy and Campaigns at Oxfam - on the Downing Street Policy Unit. Said

the latter back in 2002: "When you speak to Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, they really understand [the] issues. They are easily some of the best leaders when it comes to talking about development and dismantling subsidy, and they are making the right arguments time and again."

Of course there are some within Making Poverty History that see through the scam. War on Want is dismayed at the way New Labour's overseas policies are winning widespread acceptance and undermining their own campaigning efforts. And neither is Christian Aid happy at Oxfam's over-cosy, less critical relationship with the government. Friends of the Earth likewise believe there are disadvantages to the privileged position Oxfam enjoys with the government, believing the demands of campaign movements are becoming diluted and generalised.

They have a point. Blair sees himself as somewhat spearheading the MPH campaign at Gleneagles and queries why the MPH are heading for Edinburgh when he speaks their jargon. In Dundee, in March of this year, he commented: "It would be very odd if people came to protest against this G8, as we're focusing on poverty in Africa and climate change. I don't quite know what they'll be protesting against."

Making Poverty History has been so linked to the government as to be rendered toothless. When the main players in the coalition demanded a meeting with the government, Whitehall couldn't accede fast enough. So closely have Blair and Brown been identified with the objectives of the coalition that they have been criticised by other EU member states for softening their pro-liberalisation stance.

And who is it that rallied to the defence of the government to counter the claims of Blair's cynics in Europe? None other than Oxfam who issued a statement criticising Blair's detractors for trying to hamper Britain's attempt to help the world's poor. It is no secret that Oxfam has informed other developmental groups linked to Make Poverty History that it is important not to be perceived as being confrontational with the government now that Blair and Brown are singing from the same hymn sheet as them.

Opening up Africa

Meanwhile, John Hilary, Director of Campaigns and Policy at War on Want, says that the British contingent at the WTO told him to "get real. The development agenda does not go very far. We have to be pro-business and pro-trade" (New Statesman, 30 May).

Hilary appears to have been well-informed when one considers the agenda emerging from the much praised Commission for Africa Report. This report, which was published on 11 March is the showpiece of the Blair government's strategy for the G8, responding to its launch, the BBC, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4337239.stm>) listed eight areas necessitating action by the West, inclusive of doubling or trebling aid, cancelling debt, spending more on HIV/AIDS, financing African universities and the removal of trade barriers to African exports in the West. (The report can be downloaded in full or in sections at: <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/introduction.html>)

There is much in the report to whet the appetite of the anti-poverty campaigner. But, you need only read the précis of the various chapters to suss out what is in fact the real schema. In chapter 7, for instance, objectives for fiscal growth in Africa are alleged to be possible "only if the obstacles of... a discouraging investment climate are overcome". And it proposes the "public and private sector working together to identify the obstacles to a favourable investment climate". How else can this be interpreted other than in suggesting more liberalisation and privatisation and more opportunities for western corporations to exploit African resources and labour?

The summary of Chapter 8 says: "Investments in infrastructure and the enabling climate for the private sector are at the top of the agenda." Is this not the government spearheading neoliberal reform in Africa on behalf of big business?

Business Action for Africa has been in cahoots with the Commission for Africa. This coalition of 250 business representatives met with the Commission in February following formal dialogue between the Commission and the private sector on the continents of Africa, North America and Europe - a meeting arranged via the Business Contact Group, itself set up to provide private sector input to the Commission for Africa, and the result of a meeting co-chaired by Gordon Brown and Reuter's chairman, Niall Fitzgerald.

Referring to the Business Contact Group, Corporate Watch observed:

"Its 16 or so corporate members read like a roll call of the most exploitative and despised companies currently operating on

the continent including Anglo American, Shell, De Beers, Rio Tinto and...Diageo, who also own the Gleneagles hotel where the G8 Summit will take place. Its programme was managed by Shell International's Senior Business Development Advisor for Africa. Also managing the Contact Group is the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC). The Corporate Council on Africa and the Canadian Council on Africa also gave input, thus allowing oil corporations, ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, a say." (http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid_1535)

Dave Miller, writing for *Znet* in an article entitled *Spinning the G8*, commented:

"The corporations involved can barely contain their excitement. The 'outlook' of the business community is a 'positive one' says one of the CFA commissioners. 'It believes Africa is the next frontier for investment'. James Smith, the UK chair of Shell, which co-hosted the meeting, noted that progress 'requires that the private sector has a bigger role'. The chair of the Commonwealth Business Council, the business lobby group co-hosting the meeting, read out the concluding statement. Dr Mohan Kaul affirmed that 'getting the

"The protesters at the G8 are united in supporting capitalism"

conditions right for doing business in Africa is the biggest single investment for the future well-being of its citizens'. A 'vibrant and successful private sector... is required' he noted. (http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cf?ItemID_7852)

EU states may well be critical of Britain's new pro-Africa stance as being influenced by celebrities and NGOs, but the truth is that affiliates to Make Poverty History, in applauding Brown and Blair, are the unwitting accomplices of a government which forms the vanguard of the latest corporate drive to open up markets throughout the developing world.

World-wide reaction

Increasingly, in the last decade, there has been a worldwide reaction against neoliberal globalisation, corporate power and the injustices associated with modern-day capitalism. Everywhere where the world's ruling elite have assembled to decide their next step they have been met with protests and demonstrations that have attracted hundreds of thousands. Demonstrations at Seattle, Gothenburg, Cologne, Evian, Birmingham, Prague, Genoa and Quebec, have stimulated debate on the nature of modern day capitalism. Thousands of articles have been written on the subject and hundreds of books have been published that explore the aims, objectives and the alternatives offered by the anti-globalisation movement.

What is now clear is that the anti-globalisation/pro-development movement, however well-meaning, does not seek to replace capitalism with any real alternative social system. At best it attracts a myriad of groups, all pursuing their own reformist

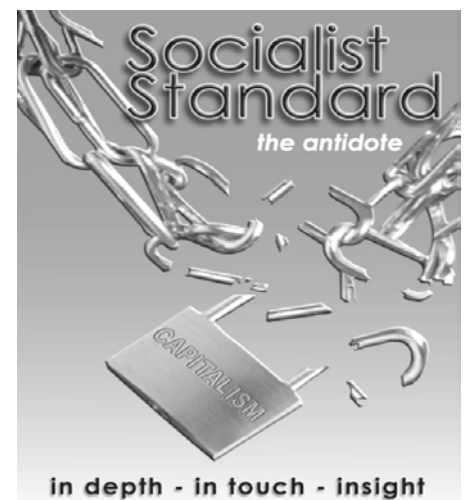
agenda. Some call for greater corporate responsibility. Some demand the restructuring of international institutions like the IMF, World Bank and the WTO. Others call for the expansion of democracy and fairer trading conditions, debt cancellation and more aid. All, however, fail to address the root cause of the problems of capitalism and promote the damnable system they are critical of by applauding any meagre reform.

One thing is certain: no amount of high table reform is going to legislate poverty out of existence as the MHP coalition believes. Capitalism cannot be reformed in the interests of the world's suffering billions, because reform does not address the basic contradiction between profit and need. Moreover, reform can be so packaged and camouflaged as to be acceptable to protestors whilst leaving their real grievances unaddressed. The world's leaders simply cannot be depended upon to implement real change because they can only ever act as the executive of corporate capitalism.

The protesters at the G8 might think they are united in common cause, but in truth they are only united in supporting capitalism and in their mistaken belief that poverty can be legislated out of existence. They have no blueprint for change other than the three demands put forward by the Make Poverty History campaign - Fair trade, more aid and debt cancellation - and this is about as radical as it gets. In mirroring in their objectives the overseas goals of Blair and Brown they are anything but the modern day revolutionaries they claim to be.

It is now no utopian fantasy - but a practical, revolutionary proposition - to suggest we can live in a world without waste or want or war, in which each person has free access to the benefits of civilisation. That much is assured. We certainly have the science, the technology and the know-how. All that is missing is the will - the global desire for change that can make that next great historical advance possible; a belief in ourselves as masters of our own destiny; a belief that it is possible to free production from the artificial constraints of profit and to fashion a world in our own interests. And how soon this happens depends upon us all - each and every one of us. ■

JOHN BISSETT



The magazine for the post-capitalist age

Who Are the Anti-Capitalists?

Does the anti-capitalist movement really want "another world" as it claims, or just another form of capitalism?

In December 1999 a meeting of the World Trade Organisation took place in America, in Seattle. Delegates were met by a large demonstration which ended in a riot both by some of the demonstrators and by the police. So was born an international protest movement that has come to be known as the "anti-capitalist" or "anti-globalisation" movement.

"Anti-globalisation" was not a very good choice of name since you can't be against globalisation. Well you can, but it doesn't make sense. Globalisation - in the sense of the world becoming more integrated, of the emergence of "one world" - is basically a good thing, part of the preparation of the material basis for a world socialist society. In the end, most in the movement itself came to realise this and adopted the slogan "Another World is Possible", i.e. another sort of globalisation is possible. It is actually quite a good slogan, which we socialists can endorse - and use - too.

But what do they envisage by "another world"? We know what we mean: a world without frontiers in which all the resources of the planet, both natural and industrial, have become the common heritage of all humanity and are used, under democratic control, to turn out what is needed by people to live and to enjoy life. As far as we are concerned, that is the only framework within which can be solved the problems facing humanity, not only obviously world problems such as global warming, wars and the threat of war, but also more "local" problems such as in the fields of healthcare, education, transport and the like but which are basically the same in all countries.

That's what we mean by "another world" but what do they mean by it? Some (a handful) may agree with us. But most don't. Most would, however, be prepared to accept being described as "anti-capitalist".

But what is capitalism? To most people, capitalism is associated, rightly or wrongly, with three things: private ownership, production for profit, and laissez-faire economics.

Corporate capitalism

Private ownership originally meant the ownership of industry by private individuals. But, while this may have been the case in the days of Adam Smith (in the 1770s), this hasn't been the predominant form of ownership since the introduction and rapid spread in the second half of the 19th century of what in England was called a "limited company" and in America a "corporation". A limited company is a separate legal entity in its own right. It is the company, the corporation, that owns the assets, the shareholders owning as a collective group not as individuals. This means that they are only personally liable, if the company goes bankrupt, for the amount



of their shareholding, not their total wealth. Hence the name "limited liability company".

So, as well as private ownership it would be more accurate to speak of capitalism as nowadays involving company or corporate ownership. And, indeed, some in the anti-capitalist movement take this into account by talking of "corporate capitalism". Which is OK as far as it goes. Only it doesn't go far enough - because it doesn't take into account state ownership. State ownership is still a form of "private" ownership in the broader sense in that it is still a form of ownership (by those who benefit from it) that excludes - deprives - other people; it is not at all the same as common ownership, which is ownership by everybody - or nobody, since with common ownership no individual or group of

Anti-globalisation protesters in Washington, 1999.

individuals can say "this is my property, you can't use it". With state ownership, those who control the state can, and do, say this.

So, we would say that capitalism is based on the individual, corporate or state ownership of the means of production whereas, for most in the anti-capitalist movement, it means only individual or corporate ownership. Which makes a difference of course, as to what you are going to regard as "anti" or "non" capitalism.

Production for profit

But there is no dispute, not even with avowed supporters of capitalism, that one of the key features of capitalism is production

for profit. The motive for producing things under capitalism is to make a profit, as the difference in money terms between the cost of producing them and the money received when they're sold. Differences arise of course over the origin and justification of profits, but all are agreed that seeking to make a monetary profit is what motivates production under capitalism. In fact, the "Profit System" is another - very good - name for capitalism, which we often use ourselves.

From another angle, capitalism could also be called the Wages System since most people under it get a living by working for a wage or salary. But employers are not philanthropists. They don't employ people simply to provide them with an income to buy what they need to live. They only employ people when they calculate that they can get something out of it - profit, which is the difference between the value of what employees produce compared with what they are paid as wages and salaries. But profits are not all used up in riotous living by employers and their hangers-on. Some is of course but any employer or company that consumed all its profits in this way wouldn't last too long. Under the pressure of competition on the market, firms are compelled to re-invest most of the profits they make in keeping the productive apparatus they control as up-to-date as possible, so that they can produce as cheaply as possible and sell their products at a price equal to or below that of their rivals. Failure to do this will lead to falling sales and lower profits and eventually either to bankruptcy or to being taken over by some rival.

So, capitalism is an economic system where, under pressure from the market, profits are accumulated as further capital, i.e. as money invested in production with a view to making further profits. This is not a matter of the individual choice of those in control of capitalist production - it's not due to their personal greed or inhumanity - it's something forced on them by the operation of the system. And which operates irrespective of whether a particular economic unit is the property of an individual, a limited company, the state or even of a workers' cooperative.

Neo-liberalism

The third popular idea of capitalism - laissez-faire economics - is more controversial as a defining feature of capitalism. Laissez-faire - from the French for "let it take place" or "leave it alone" - is basically a call for governments not to interfere in the operation of the market, to let market forces operate unhindered. It was first coined by some 18th century French economists opposed to the restrictions on trade and industry inherited from feudal times that then still existed. And was taken up by Adam Smith and in the 19th century by the mill-owners of Lancashire - hence its one-time other name of "Manchesterism". It has also been called "liberalism", associated as it was with the policy of Free Trade advocated and defended by the British Liberal Party in its hey-day. But it has never really existed in anything like a pure form.

For as long as capitalism has existed (and Marx and others date the beginning of capitalism to the middle of the 16th century) state "interference", or to use a neutral word state "intervention", in the



James Burnham

economy has always existed. So laissez-faire is more a policy, advocated by certain interest groups within capitalism at certain times and in certain places. As such it can't be said to be a defining feature of capitalism.

With the Great Slump of the 1930s, state intervention grew continuously. Economic teachings were changed to take this into account and to justify it - the so-called Keynesian Revolution. In fact state intervention was growing to such an extent that, in the 1940s, many thought that the trend was towards a completely statized economy. Witness books such as James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* and George Orwell's *1984*. There were also optimists who thought that the gradual extension of nationalisation and the Welfare State would eventually end in socialism. But this was not to be: neither full state capitalism nor socialism resulted. Except in places like Russia (and later China) and its

"The anti-capitalist movement is doomed to failure"

satellites where there already existed more or less full state capitalism, this process stopped at a so-called mixed economy of individual, corporate and state enterprises.

Then came the crisis that broke out in the early 1970s, from which the world economy has still not fully recovered (growth rates are nothing like they were in the 40s, 50s and 60s). But the political reaction to this prolonged period of relative stagnation was the opposite to what it had been in the 1930s. Unproductive state spending had to be cut back in order for a country's industries to remain competitive on world markets. It resulted in a retreat, not an extension of state intervention. In the 80s under Reagan in America and Thatcher in Britain and others in other countries, privatisation, deregulation, cuts in the Welfare State, were the order of the day. Keynesian economics was dethroned and replaced by Monetarism. Opponents called these policies "neo-liberalism", by which they mean a return to the laissez-faire policies advocated by Adam Smith, the Manchester cotton-lords and the 19th century British Liberal Party.

In the literature of the anti-capitalist movement this word "neo-liberalism" occurs again and again. In fact, so often

that it gives a very strong hint that this is what the movement is really opposed to, that this is what it means by "anti-capitalism". Not opposition to capitalism as such (as we would understand it: the economic mechanism of production for sale with a view to profit) but opposition only to the policies currently pursued by nearly every country in the world and imposed by the IMF and the WTO on those who might be tempted not to.

Another policy

The alternative they offer to neo-liberalism is not anti-capitalism, at least only insofar as capitalism is identified with liberalism (which as we saw is wrong). It is basically a return to the State interventionism of the 1950s and 1960s. The argument is that the State could, if it so chose (or if enough popular pressure was brought to bear on it), abandon neo-liberal, laissez-faire policies and again adopt interventionist ones (import controls, currency controls, restore and extend the Welfare State, regulate corporations, even re-nationalise industries). More that "Another Policy" than "Another World" is possible. But there's nothing anti-capitalist about import controls, currency controls, etc. In fact they were practised before the 1980s by openly pro-capitalist governments just as much as by pseudo-socialist Labour governments.

There is some parallel between the old Labour movement and the new anti-capitalist movement. For the old Labour movement too, capitalism was essentially private capitalism. In its declarations it was "private profit" and "profiteering" (i.e. making too much profit) rather than profit as such that was denounced; the alternative promised was state capitalism (nationalisation and state control). It, too, set out to tame and humanise capitalism - and failed utterly, so utterly in fact that Labour and similar parties now openly embrace the market, competition and profit-making, the whole "enterprise culture" package. Instead of them changing capitalism, capitalism has changed them into a mere alternative team of managers of the capitalist system. The anti-capitalist movement is not likely to be any more successful in taming capitalism. In fact, following this road, it is doomed to failure.

The economic mechanism that is capitalism is just too strong and can't be overcome either by government action or by lobbying or by political pressure in the streets. Capitalism just cannot be reformed to work in any other way than it does and always has done. An effective anti-capitalist movement will have to be one that works for ending the impersonal economic mechanism that is capitalism by restoring control of production to society; which can only be done on the basis of the Earth's natural and industrial resources having become the common heritage of all Humanity. ■

ADAM BUICK

Iraq, imperialism and the anti- war campaign

The anti-war campaign agitates for withdrawal of all Australian and US troops from Iraq, but this is not a demand for no war in Iraq (although the campaign organisers seem to think that it is), it is a demand that the existing civil war be allowed to continue without the US and Australia backing one side or the other. The fact that the civil war started because of the US invasion does not change this.

It is wildly unlikely, but just possible, that the US would indeed withdraw. They have done something loosely similar in Vietnam, Somalia and Lebanon. Conceivably, it could happen in Iraq. However, Iraqi oil is an enormously rich prize, and the strategic leverage that it would grant to the US over the EU, China and Japan is an even richer prize.

The US invaded Iraq to gain control of the most cheaply accessible large oilfields in the world. It will withdraw only if the insurgency makes the military costs of controlling Iraq (which increase the effective cost of producing the oil) so great that these costs become an intolerable burden on the US capitalist class as a whole, or if popular resistance in the US and throughout their allies produces the same effect.

Almost certainly, the insurgency would have to get much, much worse or popular resistance massively increase, before that point was reached, because the US does not want the oil of Iraq only for the sake of the profits to be gained from it.

They also want it because having control over the two largest oil producers in OPEC (Saudi Arabia and Iraq) would mean that the US would have something approaching a veto over the industrial development of their three main world rivals; China, Japan and the EU.

The justifications for the invasion are entirely hypocritical, both the pre-invasion claims about the weapons of mass destruction, and the post-invasion ones based on the blood-soaked repressiveness of Saddam Hussein's regime and the story that "We did it to bring democracy to the Iraqis". We may begin to take Iraqi democracy and sovereignty seriously when the US government is willing to accept an order from an elected Iraqi government that US forces leave Iraq.

The Ba'athist regime was, indeed, one of the world's worst tyrannies, but that didn't bother

the US while Iraq was a US ally, during, for example, the Iran-Iraq war. The US has no objection to blood-soaked tyrannies, provided that they are useful (meaning profitable, directly or indirectly) to the US ruling class. The chemical and biological WMD, or the facilities for making them, were originally supplied by the US and Western European governments, at a time when there were certainly terrorist outfits headquartered in Baghdad; Abu Nidal's, for one. So, the possibility that Iraq would pass WMD to terrorists (a possibility that the US and other Western governments helped create), only became a threat when the US needed an excuse for an invasion. Andrew Wilkie, who was in a position to know, developed the real point:

"Superimposed over specifics like oil, however, was a much bigger issue - the US's determination to safeguard and enhance its global ideological, economic and military hegemony. This is the big one: the grand strategy of the US to reign supreme permanently, as espoused by the so-called 'neo-conservatives' and articulated bluntly in September 2002 in The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. In this quest, Iraq was as much a demonstration as a consequence - an almost theatrical

performance against a country consequent enough for people to notice, for reasons alarming enough for people to care, on terms lopsided enough to guarantee a crushing demonstration of US military muscle. Or at least that was the idea."

However, even if the US did withdraw, then almost certainly, Iraq would not be left to its own blood-letting; there would very probably be other invasions, Turkey and Iran being the obvious candidates, Syria and Saudi Arabia other possibilities.

Even if, through some miracle, there was no further foreign interference in Iraq after a US withdrawal, there is no reason for confidence that the civil war would stop anytime soon or even that it would be less bloody in the absence of US and Australian troops. One of the bloodiest civil wars of the twentieth century occurred only a little over ten years ago, without any obvious interference from the West, except for a French intervention to protect the perpetrators of the genocide; we refer, of course, to Rwanda.

That civil war fed directly into what must be the worst war in the world; in the Congo there have been an estimated 3 million dead and it's still going on. Almost certainly, the riches that can be looted from

"We may begin to take Iraqi democracy and sovereignty seriously when the US government is willing to accept an order from an elected Iraqi government that US forces leave Iraq."

Iraq, and the strategic advantage that can be gained from that looting, exceed those that can be had by looting from the Congo; which is one reason why the West is not directly involved in the Congo. (Although all the states surrounding Congo, plus Zimbabwe, are) It is also why Iraq will not be left alone; any state that can see an opportunity to interfere, will.

No one, least of all anti-war demonstrators in Australia, should pretend that any of these possibilities are in any way in the interests of the people of Iraq.

Virtually all the left-wing agitation about Australian foreign policy, and US imperial policy, is based on the underlying assumption (or rather, fantasy), that the natural order of capitalism is a world of independent, sovereign, mutually-respectful nations. What is thought to be necessary to achieve this is that the US stop acting as an imperialist thug, and that Australia stop helping them do it. Nice idea, but capitalism just ain't like that.

It's a world system of interdependent, not a worldwide collection of independent ones.

If the US declines as an imperialist power, others will take their place, China being an obvious candidate and, given the Chinese government's record of racist, genocidal colonialism in



Waiting in the wings?

Tibet, they may even make the US look moderate by comparison. An obvious target for the first major Chinese imperialist adventure is the group of oil-and-natural-gas-rich states between

the Chinese Western border and the Caspian Sea.

Capitalist states (of which China is one) are not moral entities, and their ruling classes do not react to attempts at moral persuasion. They perpetually seek profit and react to what could loosely be called profit-and-loss calculations. If profit requires that they dominate other countries (to the extent that they can), so be it.

The consent of the ruled (us!) is essential to the continued functioning of capitalism (in both its state-capitalist and private-capitalist forms). Our consent, or our resistance, is part of our rulers' profit-and-loss estimates.

We can make this particular imperialist adventure too difficult or too expensive for the rulers of Australia, which is, after all, a junior partner of US capitalism.

The people of the US and the rest of the world, by huge efforts, could make the Iraq occupation too difficult or too expensive, even for the dominant capitalist power. But as long as we, all of us, consent to the capitalist system as a whole, in other words, so long as we resist only this particular imperialist adventure, then there will be more imperialist adventures, by the US and others, more bloodshed, and more terrorist atrocities.

There will also be more poverty, ecological devastation, and more lives spent on mostly-meaningless work and totally meaningless consumerism.

All that the protest organisers can offer, fundamentally, is the prospect of more problems within capitalism, including more wars caused by imperialist adventures, and by rulers using "ethnic tensions" to grab territory, etc., and more protests against those problems and wars. And so on, and on, and on.

There's got to be a better way, and there is; abolish capitalism. That's what we are working for.

The only solution is to work for a world system based on common ownership, and moneyless, free access to wealth. Only then can we have genuinely democratic economies, and therefore genuinely democratic societies. We call this socialism. (which has nothing to do with the deeply repressive and now-failed variant of capitalism invented in the former Soviet Union, and adapted in China, Vietnam, etc.)

The precondition for this society is a majority who understand and want socialism, and understand and reject capitalism. Nothing less than this can give us socialism. Leaders certainly can't.

Huge efforts are required. Let's make sure that they are directed towards getting off the treadmill that is capitalism, not towards trying to turn it into something it can't be. ■
World Socialist Party of Australia leaflet.



Cooking the Books (2)

Wages, prices and profits

Mervyn King, as Governor of the Bank of England, is supposed to know all about inflation. After all, his remit, now that the

Bank no longer takes direct orders from the government, is to keep inflation below 2 per cent a year.

Inflation proper, as the name suggests, is not just any rise in the general price level but a rise caused by over-issuing the currency, something which is entirely under the Bank's control. However, the word has come to mean, even to the Bank's Governor, any rise in the general price level whatever the cause.

Judging by his comments in a speech he gave in Bradford on 13 June, King also subscribes to the view that wage increases cause inflation. The Guardian (14 June) reported his speech under the headline "Migrants hold down inflation says governor":

"Mr King said that the 120,000 eastern Europeans who had arrived in Britain since 10 more countries joined the European Union in May 2004 had kept the lid on wages and prevented inflation from rising . . . 'Without this influx to fill the skill gaps in a tight labour market it is likely that earnings would have risen at a faster rate, putting upward pressure on the costs of employers and,

ultimately, inflation,' he said."

At least King had the honesty to make it clear that employers (whatever vote-catching politicians might say) welcome immigration of workers from other countries to help both ease skills shortages and keep wages down, but he seemed to be suggesting that, faced with a wage increase, employers can simply pass this on as increased prices.

Later on in his speech, however, he had to admit that employers are not at liberty to raise prices at will:

"May's figures for producer prices showed the cost of the fuel and raw materials used by manufacturers still growing strongly but the increases being largely absorbed in lower profit margins. According to the Office for National Statistics, input prices increased by 7.8% last month compared with a year ago and increased by 0.2% compared with April. In contrast, the weakness of demand and the strength of competitive pressures meant the price of goods leaving factory prices fell by 0.2% last month."

But why, if employers couldn't pass on increases in energy and materials costs, why could they have done so if wages had

increased? The answer is that they can only increase their prices, when their costs increase, if the market will allow this. Otherwise the cost increase, including wages, has to be "absorbed in lower profit margins".

Marx made the same point 140 years ago in a speech he gave to British Trade Unionists. "A general rise of wages would", he said, "result in a fall in the general rate of profit, but not affect values" (*Value, Price and Profit*, chapter XII).

The Socialist Standard

Everyone's reading it

Marketing the suicide seed

In the second week of February the United Nations convened a meeting in Bangkok that, despite its importance, failed to make newspaper headlines or feature anywhere in news broadcasts. The lack of apparent newsworthiness, however, belies the meeting's significance, for in time the issue under discussion could well turn out to have profound consequences for the world's food supply.

At this meeting the Canadian government attempted to overturn the 1998 international moratorium on the commercialisation of 'sterile gene technology.' The Canadian delegation, acting on behalf of the multinational seed companies as well as the US government - not a party to the UN Biodiversity Convention - fiercely attacked a UN report which urged governments throughout the world to ban this particularly nasty branch of GM technology. A reversal of the current moratorium would permit the unleashing of what is known as the Terminator seed with devastating consequences to farmers, particularly in the undeveloped world.

So why should this issue cause so much concern? The US Department of Agriculture first developed Terminator technology in conjunction with multinational seed corporations in the late 1990s. The primary inventor of this technology, Melvin J. Oliver of the United States Department of Agriculture, explained: "Our mission is to protect US agriculture and to make us competitive in the face of foreign competition. Without this, there is no way of protecting the patented seed technology"

(www.earthisland.org). The avowed aim was to protect the investment in the production of superior genetically modified seeds. It gave scientists the ability to modify plants that would produce seeds that grow to maturity but would be incapable of germinating if planted. Put simply, this means that while farmers will get a good crop in the first year of sowing, if they try to save harvested seed for planting in the following year the crop will be sterile, hence the name 'Terminator'.

When the discovery was made public in 1998 it provoked global condemnation, particularly from Asian and African countries and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity was compelled to impose a moratorium on its further development. To all intents and purposes, the issue seemed closed, although this did not deter the seed corporations from continuing their research and registering patent rights over areas of this technology.

Better than patents

Commercialising Terminator would have a devastating impact on an estimated 1.4 billion of the world's poorest farmers who depend on 'saved seeds' and who exchange seed to develop new varieties suited to their growing conditions as a primary source of seed stock, and hence food. In practice genetically modified Terminator seeds will be neither affordable nor relevant to the needs of

farmers in the undeveloped world. Terminator or 'suicide seeds' have been developed to prevent the successful sowing of 'saved seeds,' with a view to forcing farmers to purchase new seed every year and making them reliant on the seed market dominated by the gene corporations. As a means of controlling seed usage this biological solution is more permanent and infinitely more effective than patent or legal restrictions that seek to deny farmers the right to raise their own seed bank. In short Terminator has been developed solely to maximise the profits of the seed industry.

Half of the world's population cannot afford to buy new seed every year and typically depend on 'saved seed' and their skills to adapt a blend of varieties to suit growing conditions. Reversing the moratorium would enable the profit-seeking seed industry to enter completely "new sectors of the seed market - especially in self-pollinating seeds such as wheat, rice, cotton, soybeans, oats and sorghum" (www.earthisland.org). Until recently agribusiness had paid scant regard to crops grown in undeveloped countries, mainly because the industry had been unable to control seed reproduction. Those advocating sterile gene technology claim it could be a boon to undeveloped countries because the corporations that have developed new and better seed would then have the means of protecting their investment and could concentrate on the development of seeds suited to undeveloped countries, hitherto ignored, without having this investment undermined.



There can be little doubt that if Terminator is brought to market the logic of profit will mean the multinational seed corporations will seek to introduce genetic seed sterility into all genetically modified seeds offered for sale. Within a short time this could mean that the world's two most important food crops - wheat and rice, on which three-quarters of the world's poorest people depend - would come under the control of the seed monopolies. The notes to the first Terminator patent lodged by Delta and Pine Land explained that the company intended to make its technology widely available to competitors, but this was so as to penetrate the market with Terminator seed as quickly as possible and across as many varieties of crops as is feasible.

Investment follows profits and if the staple crops of the undeveloped countries can be 'tied up' by Terminator, investment will pour into the seed corporations commercially producing seed where market sales can be guaranteed year on year. It can be no coincidence that the agricultural chemical corporations including DuPont, Dow Corning, Novartis, AgroEvo, and Monsanto have acquired major interests in the seed breeding industry where the ten largest corporations control 40 percent of the global seed market.

Not surprising

The UN Bangkok meeting did not, however,

Sterile seeds - unimaginable in any sane society, but capitalism is not a sane society



conclude in the way the seed corporations had expected. Governments nurturing GM industries not as advanced as those of the US and Canada intervened to thwart the intentions of Canadian government and the multinational corporations. We should not be surprised by the stance of the Canadian government because it is the role of governments to act in the interest of the class who live by profit and it is only doing what is wanted by its masters. But even though the de facto moratorium remains intact the Terminator issue is still

could consider this worthwhile with no other conceivable purpose than to boost profits to those who sell it. But this is capitalism.

It is often claimed that science is neutral - being neither good nor bad. This is an abstraction that ignores the social relations, the social context in which science develops and fails to address the question - 'who benefits'? Technology is almost always directed to the maximisation of profit and frequently has a detrimental impact on the environment or

on the negotiating table. It will be discussed at the next UN Convention of Biodiversity in March 2006 and the meeting of the G8 in Scotland this month and every other opportunity thereafter. The multinationals smell blood and have moved up a gear to bring the 'suicide seed' to market.

It is unimaginable that in any sane society scientists in GM technology would wish to identify and develop a terminator gene - only a society motivated by profit

human well-being. With the pool of scientific knowledge reputedly doubling every twelve months people tend to be intimidated by 'science,' with no choice but to place reliance on so-called 'experts' who generally conceal a vested interest when urging a particular development. The real decisions that influence the world are made in secret and because we live in a society where the interests of the class that own the corporations and companies reign supreme, maximising profits will always head the agenda.

The prudent application of GM technology could be of some benefit to humanity and may be developed in socialism where food will be produced simply to feed people and not for profit. But like so many other scientific developments, the emergence of Terminator demonstrates that certain areas of science can become extremely dangerous when left in the hands of those whose only motivation is profit. In capitalism profit will always prevail over human need and research will normally be funded only into areas where profit can be maximised - regardless of the consequences on human welfare and the planet on which we depend. ■

STEVE TROTT

Enough for All

The Earth's population is now just over 6 billion, and rising. However, it is unlikely to just carry on increasing: with many now choosing to have fewer children, the likelihood is that population will level off around 2050, at around 10 billion (according to the best estimates of UN demographers). Socialist society will of course have to feed these billions, something that the present profit-based system is all too plainly unable to do. As argued by Colin Tudge in *So Shall We Reap* (Penguin 2004), it would not be at all difficult to feed even 10 billion, as long as agriculture were organised along sensible (his word is 'enlightened') lines.

The total land area of the planet is about 12 billion hectares, but only 1.3 billion hectares can currently be used as arable land. Even with a population of 10 billion, this would mean 0.13 hectares per person, or something over a third of an acre. If farmed by means of intensive horticulture (e.g. for tomatoes, avocados, mushrooms), a plot this size could feed dozens. But horticulture on a very large scale is hardly practicable, and ordinary arable farming has to be the essential basis for cultivating land. Proper mixtures of crops and livestock on mixed farms are in fact the best approach.

The average yield in England is about eight tonnes of wheat per hectare per year, enough to feed a couple of dozen people; so the 0.13 hectare per person available once global population settles down would be plenty to feed three or four. The conclusion of such calculations is inescapable: even without genetically-modified crops, the Earth can produce more than enough to feed likely future populations. Take account of the fact that the area under cultivation might be doubled, and fears of overpopulation and appalling famines seem to vanish. We need not take on board all of Tudge's ideas about food cultivation to accept his general point that more than enough food could be produced with current knowledge, resources and techniques, without a need for new technological discoveries.

Wheat, rice and maize are the three most important crops, and they can be produced in sufficient quantity to feed humanity, to ensure that nobody dies of malnutrition and no child goes to bed crying of hunger. A mixed diet of these cereals, together with fresh fruit and vegetables, plus some meat and fish as individuals desire, is just what the doctor (and the planet) ordered. To quote Tudge:

"when agriculture is expressly designed to feed people, all the associated problems seem to solve themselves. In essence, feeding people is easy."

(We suspect that 'easy' here is an exaggeration - 'straightforward' seems a better choice of word.)

So why does it not happen now? Tudge's answer is essentially the one that Socialists would give: food is produced for profit, and those who have no or very little money do not constitute a market. He identifies the current capitalist model as monetarised, industrialised, corporatised and globalised (MICG, for short). The interests of corporations, treating agriculture as just

"Why should the work of producing food to keep people alive and satisfy their taste buds be a matter of cut-throat competition?"

a b a l a n c e d d i e t



A balanced diet for humanity is not beyond us

another industry to be milked for profits, take precedence over those of people, whether workers in 'advanced' capitalism or peasants or farmers in 'developing' countries. Companies like McDonald's have an enormous, and increasing, power over the livestock industry, a power they are now extending to the fruit-growers too. Many producers of fruit and vegetables are at the beck and call of the big supermarkets, forced to deliver the kind of bland homogenous pap that these claim their customers want but that in fact just provide bigger profits. And this mass-produced food is not even good for you: Britain has over four million reported cases of food poisoning a year, for instance.

Yet Tudge does not see the need for an alternative to capitalism. He regards the Russian dictatorship as having been the antithesis of capitalism (actually it was just another brand of capitalism), and naturally concludes that that was no solution. Instead he wants to replace the MICG version with 'a different model of capitalism', one which apparently will have all the features of the current model but none of the nasty side-effects. We need to be radical, he claims, but not revolutionary. But alas, his proposals are just wishful thinking within a profit-motivated system - as easily get an apple tree to grow rice as get capitalism to change its nature.

Tudge quotes a small farmer from the US as saying, 'I just want to farm well. I don't want to compete with anybody.' This is a deceptively simple but very profound statement. Why should the work of producing food to keep people alive and satisfy their taste buds be a matter of cut-throat competition? Why, indeed, should life in general be a matter of competing with others and thereby being either a winner or a loser? Competition may be fine on the football field or the badminton court, but it is not the way to organise the production of food or anything else. People can work together - with each other and with the planet on which we all live - to make that work more pleasant and enjoyable and to produce things, including food, that people really want. But to achieve that will need a revolution in the way the world is organised. ■

PAUL BENNET

Open letter to some anti-capitalists

MAKEYOURMARK are part of the *Dissent! Network of resistance against the G8. The group adheres to the Hallmarks of Peoples' Global Action which call for a rejection of capitalism through civil disobedience and non-violent direct action.*

Dear Friends,
I attended your meeting in Carlisle last night. It was good that so many people had turned out. I have sympathy with your organisation's objectives, but a few comments about your strategy.

I thought much of your analysis of capitalism as a system that can only put profit before people was correct, as well as the relation of capitalism to the issues of AIDS, water availability and poverty in Africa and South America. However, I have problems with the idea of nations as victims of capitalism. Less developed nations are the losers in competition against large industrialised nations and the majority of people in those countries suffer because of it, but the state in either type of nation represents the dominant economic interests. Indigenous capitalists in the less developed nations are fighting for themselves, for domination of local resources against multinational corporations - both of which wish to continue the exploitation of people and natural resources. The corollary is that you are supporting small nations against big nations, small capitalists against big capitalists, Robert Mugabe or King Mswati III against George Bush or Silvio Berlusconi for example - and in that I fail to see a rejection of capitalism.

You made an excellent point in your presentation about the man-made laws of capitalism being assumed to be natural laws and therefore unchangeable. I believe that this point also applies to the nation and inseparably the state which are also man-made constructs that have arisen to their present form with the need to manage the conflicting interests within capitalism. In short, the state is part of capitalism not separate from it. Which leads to another point in your presentation where you considered that state-owned industries are worth defending. The experience of state-run industries in this country and elsewhere is no utopia, in fact in some cases it has been a disaster. State-owned industries mostly don't have much difference in character to private industries, they consist of capital put forward by the state which wage or salary workers operate and the goods or services they produce are either sold or rationed out by bureaucrats. Neither for the consumer, as goods or services are still allocated according to ability-to-pay or by handout, or the producer, still embroiled in the labour-capital conflict, is the state ownership of capital a rejection of capitalism.

In one of your slides you asked whether the G8 should be reformed or abolished, I don't think either will 'make poverty history' or allow people to come before profit, nor will 'dropping the debt' or rearranging trade rules. Capitalism existed before the G8 and it would exist without the G8. You've recognised that

asking for reforms won't work, but I don't really see how making your own reforms through civil disobedience and direct action will change the fundamental social relations of capitalism. It is capitalism - the system of minority ownership of the means of producing and distributing goods and services and allocation according to ability to pay - that causes poverty and war, breeds racism and alienation, and hampers social organisation. If you were to abolish the G8 then another organisation could take its place or they could meet in secret - back to square one. I feel what is important is not challenging aspects of capitalism and trying to change them, but challenging the system as whole.

One of the slogans you displayed in the meeting room was about a small number of committed people making a difference. However well intentioned, I don't believe a minority of society can run society in the interests of the majority. The goal of those who reject capitalism should be to break the consensus that supports capitalism and organize politically - democratically - to a replace private ownership of the means of producing goods and services with common ownership, production for need and 'can't pay, can't have' with free access - that is to replace capitalism with socialism. I think that a society run for the majority must be made by the majority and the shortest distance between capitalism and an alternative society is a straight line. Let's campaign for the abolition of capitalism and not misdirect our energies in trying to humanise capitalism, which can only - as you recognise - put profit before people.

I'm hoping to get to Edinburgh for the G8 protest but not to beg for, or batter, a nicer kind of capitalism out of the G8 leaders. I'll be trying to get socialist ideas across to all those there who recognise that the world is in a mess and are willing to do something about it. I hope I'll see you there, maybe I'll give you a leaflet or a copy of the *Socialist Standard*.

Yours for world socialism
Piers Hobson

Africa: a Marxian Analysis

A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from *The Socialist Standard*. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to:

- State and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Early 20th Century South Africa
- Colonialism and Capitalism
- Religion, Race and Class
- Sharia Law in Nigeria
- Education system in Ghana

Available from **The Socialist Party**, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN
£1 (£1.35 by post). Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'

Book Reviews

Radical Politics in Modern Ireland. The Irish Socialist Republican Party 1896-1904. David Lynch. Irish Academic Press. €39.



The Irish Socialist Republican Party, which only existed between 1896 and 1904, was the equivalent in Ireland of the Social Democratic Federation in Britain. Like the SDF, the ISRP tried to combine campaigning for the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production (socialism, also called at the time, in Britain as well as Ireland, the Socialist Republic) with campaigning for reforms as a means, in the words of the ISRP's programme, "of palliating the evils of the present social system". The ISRP had another demand: Irish independence. As this book shows, it wasn't easy to combine these three objectives.

The party - which according to Lynch never had more than 80 members - was torn in all three directions. The main enemy was seen as the Home Rule party, both because it stood for capitalism in a Home Rule Ireland and because it didn't stand for a complete political break with the British Empire. This led the ISRP to appeal to "advanced Nationalists", trying to convince them that an independent capitalist Ireland was an impossibility and that if they wanted an independent Ireland they should support socialism. One of Lynch's criticisms of the ISRP is that it wasn't true that an independent capitalist Ireland wasn't possible. It was (and it happened), and was the explicit policy of Arthur Griffith's original Sinn Féin with its call for the establishment of an Irish Stock Exchange, an Irish merchant marine, protection for Irish manufacturing industries, etc and the implicit policy of the physical-force Republicans.

The leading light in the ISRP was James Connolly, who for virtually the whole of its existence was its full-time organiser and editor of its paper, the *Workers' Republic*. He was later to resolve the conflict between socialism and republicanism by opting for republicanism and to die in a futile bid to establish an independent Capitalist Republic in Ireland. He is in fact an Irish National Hero with a railway station in Dublin named after him. As a result, his political writings, including those in which his socialism was more prominent than his republicanism, are still printed and read. Particularly good, from this period, is his *Labour in Irish History* which, though not published as a pamphlet till 1910, first appeared as a series in the *Workers' Republic*.

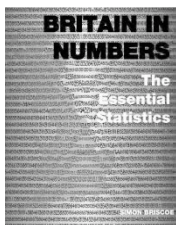
But it was not the conflict between socialism and republicanism that led to the demise of the ISRP in 1904, but that between socialism and reformism. From about 1898, as Lynch records, the ISRP came under the influence of the SLP of America and Daniel De Leon. In 1900 the SLP abandoned its reform programme and similar ideas spread within the ISRP. Although the ISRP never actually dropped its reform programme, when Connolly stood in the elections to Dublin City Council in 1903 his election address (reproduced as an appendix to this book, but which can also be seen at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1903/01/woodquay.htm>), unlike at previous elections, contained no programme of reforms.

Connolly presided at the founding conference of the Socialist Labour Party of Britain in 1903 - part of the "impossibilist revolt" within the SDF which also led to the formation of the Socialist Party of Great Britain the following year. He emigrated to America in 1903, so contributing to the demise of the ISRP, joined the SLP and became a De Leonist Industrial Unionist for a while. But that's outside the period of this book. A number of early members of the SPGB had previously been in the ISRP.

Lynch writes as a Trotskyist (quoting from Tony Cliff's *Life of Lenin*), which leads to some misinterpretations. For instance, when the ISRP made the point that in socialism there'd be no need for trade unions and strikes (because there'd be no class working for wages) he likens this to Trotsky's proposal to suppress trade unions in Bolshevik Russia because there was no need for them under a "workers' government". More amusing in view of the sort of criticism the SWP makes of us, is Lynch's argument that the ISRP, despite its emphasis on electoral action, wasn't a mere electoralist party as it also held numerous street corner meetings and so was also engaged in street politics. Nevertheless, his book is the only history of the ISRP and as such a valuable addition to the history of the working-class movement in the two large islands off the north-west coast of the European mainland.

ALB

Britain in Numbers: The Essential Statistics by Simon Briscoe (Politico's, 2005) £14.99



Did you know that workers in Britain clock up nearly 900 million hours of work each week? That a recent survey of 688 school lunchboxes recorded just one salad? Or that half of the households in the UK have less than £1,500 in savings? Simon Briscoe is

Statistics Editor of the Financial Times and this book provides copious statistics on a range of key indicators for British society and the economy at large, including comparative statistics with other countries. There are 78 chapters in total covering everything from asylum seekers to unemployment through to internet usage and vegetarianism.

As is always the case with books such as this socialists will claim that a lot of the statistical categories deployed are highly superficial or artificial (those for class being the most obvious example), but much else of what is presented is valuable and can be used to test some of the claims of politicians of all parties on major economic, social and political issues. The early section of the book is particularly interesting as it accounts for the growth of statistics-keeping and publication in the UK, set in the context of more recent developments such as the increasing use of targets as an aid to meeting policy objectives. Briscoe also usefully discusses how statistics can be used to deceive as well as illuminate and identifies a number of the common tricks employed by governments and others using case studies to illustrate his point.

Briscoe is a strong critic of New

Labour in office and the Chancellor of the Exchequer in particular. The way in which the Chancellor has made extravagant claims for economic growth, low unemployment, inflation and interest rates attracts some merciless criticism, and rightly so, with Briscoe detailing the statistical distortions and trickery used to justify bogus (or highly partial) claims.

Unfortunately, other aspects of Briscoe's book are less satisfactory. While his critiques of Labour since 1997 are authoritative and have much to commend them, Briscoe has a regrettable tendency to argue that anything he considers to be positive about the British economy or society at present has its origins in the Conservative governments that dominated politics before Blair came to office. Quite remarkably, for instance, he can claim that the Conservatives appear to have "put in place many of the foundations for the current [economic] stability". Exactly what these foundations are or how the Conservatives laid them he doesn't say, and it is also noticeable that he doesn't say - with the type of sleight of hand he chides others for - that the UK saw its two most severe downturns since the Great Depression, firstly under Thatcher in the early eighties and then under Major in the early nineties, with the ERM debacle to boot. Some 'foundations' and some 'stability'.

Generally, he places far too much emphasis on differences between Labour and Conservative governments in office - on occasion not being able to see the wood for the trees (and sometimes the branches and even the twigs). Desperate to paint Labour as a party of big government, high spending and high taxation (and - by association - comparative economic incompetence) he manages to portray a picture of Labour and Conservative governments in modern history that few people who are thinking seriously about the issues are likely to find convincing.

You would never think it from reading Briscoe, but tax as a percentage of GDP was higher when Thatcher left office than it was when she was elected in 1979 and it is an almost identical figure now under Blair (at about 36 per cent). Similarly on government spending, where little that is remarkable has occurred for many years. Largely because of the raft of one-off privatisations in the 1980s, the proportion of GDP accounted for by state spending declined from its peacetime peak in the early-mid 1970s (under Tory Ted Heath and then Labour's Harold Wilson) but since then it has tended to hover around the 40 per cent mark under governments of both complexions.

So while useful, this book has to be treated with caution as it seems to exaggerate the differences between the parties when in office, and it certainly understates the uncontrollability and anarchy of the capitalist economy, subsequently over-estimating the power of governments (especially Conservative ones it would seem) to influence it through his favoured low tax and spend policies.

The book was published just before the General Election and was reviewed in many of the broadsheet newspapers with the underlying suspicion that Briscoe hoped it would open up a debate that might be ultimately favourable to the Tories on Labour's economic record. If so, it failed and is a bit of a curate's egg because of it.
DAP

Fifty Years Ago

Is it Foolish?

The following appeared in the *Stratford Express* (3 June 1955):-

"HOW FOOLISH"

"It seems so simple to put a cross against the name of a chosen candidate - so simple that it is almost impossible to go wrong. Yet in these local divisions scores of people wasted their votes by spoiling papers in one of a variety of ways. In one of the West Ham divisions, for instance, there were 40 spoilt papers. Some people had added their name and address; some had scrawled the letters S.P.G.B. (Socialist Party of Great Britain) on the paper, while others had voted for each of the candidates and a few had put the paper in the ballot box completely blank. An indication of their state of mind, perhaps!"

It is, of course, the reference to the S.P.G.B. that concerns us, and it has to be taken in conjunction with the statement that it is "so simple to put a cross against the name of a chosen candidate." But suppose you don't choose either candidate. Suppose you are one of the million and a half former Labour voters who could discern so little difference between the parties that it wasn't worthwhile voting.

Or, again, suppose you are a Socialist and do not want Capitalism at all, not Labour-administered Capitalism or Tory-administered Capitalism? What should you do then? Is it foolish to show on the ballot paper what you do want? It has any rate had the merit that it caught the attention of the *Stratford Express*.

Of course Socialists would prefer to have their own Socialist candidates to vote for, but the Labour, Tory and Liberal parties, by agreement on the £150 deposit, made it very difficult for a small organisation to enter the field.

(From *The Socialist Standard*, July 1955)



A Country Walk in Hertfordshire

Sunday 17 July 2005 at 11.00am

Six and a half miles, including a pub stop

Meet at Bishop's Stortford Railway Station (by rail: London Liverpool Street to Bishop's Stortford).

Further Information:

Vincent Otter

07905 791638 or 020 8361 3017

Richard Botterill

01582 764929

VOTING AND DEMOCRACY; MEANS AND ENDS

The June *Pathfinders* page was in two parts "Would people in socialism spend all day voting on everything?" (small print) and "How would people vote?" (bigger print). The small print told us about "collaborative filtering" (CF) software. Developed for capitalist marketing purposes and producing recommendations based on people's likes and dislikes, CF can apparently be used in socialism to stop us voting all day on everything.

The example is given of a farmer using CF to get recommendations about what to vote on: crop yields, GM technology, etc. CF can also put people "in touch with other people of similar interests" - a variant of computer dating? Small-print *Pathfinder* admits that unfortunately "Technology cannot resolve issues of responsibility..."

Bigger-print *Pathfinder* presents as a dream what to me seems more like a

nightmare: "... in the future the technology to debate, dispute, appeal, complain, conference and vote will all be in place - at the touch of a phone button." The trouble with this is that it confuses means with ends. The essence of democracy is having information and ideas to exchange, considerations to weigh up, debates to participate in - and, in some cases, balances to be struck.

In the old days - and even to some extent today - the means to those democratic ends were focused on paper or persons - books and other publications, public meetings, casual or serious conversations. Now these old means are being challenged by new technology means - a screen to watch, a mouse to move, a button to push.

I don't doubt that a phone button or other technological device can play a part in voting and democracy. Some people - with busy lives or physical disabilities? - may find "new hat" voting technology better than the "inconvenient, time-consuming", in-company-with-other-

people method illustrated in *Pathfinder's* photo and labelled "old hat". But whatever technology is used, it is still a means to an end. It is not a substitute for that end. Debating, disputing, etc are not matters of a person relating to a piece of technology. They are matters of a person relating to one or more other persons using some form of technology as a means.

According to a 1980's pop song, video killed the radio star. It didn't. Books are said to be on the way out. They aren't - but they do have new technology competitors. This applies to debating, disputing, appealing, complaining, conferencing and voting. You can do these things directly, more or less face-to-face with other people. Or you can go a little or a long way on the road to human-to-machine "relationships". The choice is yours.

STAN PARKER (by e-mail).

Meetings

Manchester Branch Meetings

Monday 25 July, 8pm

Discussion on Charity

Saturday 30 July, 2 pm

Why You Should Be a Socialist

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre

Chiswick

Tuesday 19 July 8pm

Showing of film CAPITALISM AND KIDS' STUFF

Committee Room, Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Road), W4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park)

Edinburgh Branch

Sunday 3 July, 3pm

The G8 Summit

Quakers Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria St.)

contact email

JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk

matt@wsmweb.fsnet.co.uk

ajsc21755@blueyonder.co.uk

Lancaster Branch

Monday, 18 July, 8pm (ring to confirm)

What will constitute criminal behaviour in socialism?

The Gregson Centre, Moor Lane, Lancaster

Enquiries: **01524 383798**

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Labour wins in 1945

It was the war what done it

In late September 1938 Neville Chamberlain came back from visiting Hitler in Munich and waved a piece of paper which, he assured us, showed that he had cleverly arranged for peace in our time. A year later we found it was in fact war in our time, with serious questions about the Chamberlain government - about its complacency, ineptitude and collusion with Nazi Germany.

It was quickly apparent that there was to be no repeat of official propaganda to justify the war, by the crude "Your Country Needs You" style so typical of 1914/18. More suitable to the times, there had to be a campaign which implicitly accepted criticism of the past while relying on publicity about the horrors of Nazi Germany and of the occupied countries to persuade the British people that their first priority should be the war effort. Out of all the fear and loss and grief of war there would be a happier world, with human welfare as its dominant motivation.

The day after France had surrendered to Germany the Director General of the Ministry of Information set up a debate on "whether opportunity should be taken of an all-party government to make some promise as to social reforms after the war". A month or so later Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax, who looked and spoke like everyone's version of a typical Tory, wrote to another Cabinet Minister about a meeting with trade union leader Ernie Bevin which had discussed:

"the contrast between the readiness of the Nation, and particularly of the Treasury, to spend £9 million a day in war to protect a certain way of life and the unwillingness of the administrative authorities in peace to put up, shall we say, £10 million to assist in the reconditioning of Durham unless they could see the project earning a reasonable percentage."

Churchill speaks

The official propaganda strategy was to urge the working class to endure the miseries of war in the confident expectation that their reward would come with victory. In March 1943 Churchill broadcast the message, beginning by encouraging his listeners "to concentrate even more zealously upon the war effort" while assuring them that his government were "strong partisans of compulsory national insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave" - the kind of scheme designed by Beveridge, which was attracting popular support. There would, he said, be no unemployment after victory because the state would work with private industry to "enable the Government to exercise a balancing influence upon development which can be turned on or off as circumstances require. There is a broadening field for State ownership and enterprise, especially in relation to monopolies of all kinds".

Under the kind of benevolent stewardship Churchill was hinting at there would be expansion in education, housing and the health services. This kind of prospectus, false though it was, was highly appealing to the people whose opinions were reported by the Home Intelligence Unit of the Ministry of Information: "Three years ago, the term social security was almost unknown to the public as a whole. It now appears to be generally accepted as an urgent post-war need. It is commonly defined as 'a decent minimum standard of living for all'".

So with the end of the war, as Germany and much of the rest of Europe lay in ruins, as the full effects of the atomic bombing of the Japanese cities was being assessed, it was time for what was hoped would be a new beginning. The Conservatives were widely blamed for the cynical mess of the hapless years between one world war and another. The wartime experience of the state taking direct control of so many aspects of society encouraged the idea that this should be extended into key industries like the coal mines, the railways and the health service. In other words, the Labour Party's big day had arrived.

Labour government

If there was one lesson I had absorbed during the war, as I grew into my teens, it was that society must look to a political solution for its problems. Taking everything into account, the Labour Party seemed to me to be worth supporting, and anyway the Tory candidate in my constituency was everything I reviled. He was one of the MPs who had supported the Nazis, attending one of their big rallies and proudly shaking Hitler by the hand. An hereditary baronet, he oozed money along with his ineptitude and his ignorance of the lives of the people whose vote he assumed he could harvest by simply informing them that he supported Churchill for Prime Minister. I threw myself into working for the Labour candidate, who was in much better intellectual shape and was a dynamic campaigner. Excitedly, I stuffed envelopes and canvassed relentlessly, although I was once put out of my stride when a woman at her front door responded to my Labour Party rant by asking "

What about Ramsay MacDonald, then?" I am still embarrassed to remember that I had never even heard of the man, although learning about him did nothing to lessen my devotion to Labour; MacDonald was, I argued, all in the past, we are a new party now and we will rebuild Britain as it should be. When the results were declared in July 1945 I was able to swallow my rage and disappointment at that Tory being elected again because we had a Labour government, the first one with a working majority, so now there could be no obstacles - and no excuses either.

Some of the new Labour MPs were surprised to find themselves in the Commons. As a symptom of their emotional fragility they outraged tradition by singing The Red Flag in the Chamber. Chancellor of the Exchequer Hugh Dalton thought it was as if they were "walking with destiny" - except that the destiny which soon became obvious to the most star-struck MP was very different from all those exciting promises. British capitalism had emerged from the war in a severely damaged condition, having lost some two thirds of its export trade, with a consequent imbalance in its trade with America. The ambition - indeed, the priority - of the Labour government was to return British capitalism to its old pre-eminent position.

Worker exploitation

An important part of this was to intensify working class exploitation. A White Paper published in January 1947 laid it down that "What is necessary is increased production per annum. In attaining this everyone has a part to play". Of course the government did not really mean "everyone" - the people who had to increase their production were those whose livelihood depended on working for wages. In other words, the working class had to postpone any idea about a better, more secure life and accept what was effectively a reduction in their living standards by working harder for less. "We Work Or We Want" was how the government campaign put it, in posters and press adverts all over the country.

The Labour government quickly made it clear that they would have no truck with any nonsense about socialism (or rather what they called socialism) or workers' control; they would run this segment of capitalism as it had to be run - in the interests of the owning, ruling class. They resolutely opposed any efforts by workers to improve, or even defend, their conditions; on two occasions when dockers came out on strike they took emergency powers to order soldiers in to run the docks. They began the programme to make an atomic bomb and then a hydrogen bomb, at a cost of £100 million, without any proper discussion in Cabinet. They sent British troops to fight a colonial war in Malaysia and they joined America in the Korean war. To do this they increased the period of service under military conscription (which they had introduced, for the first time in peacetime, in March 1946) from 18 months to two years, while all those members of the government who had been conscientious objectors in the First World War kept their silence. At home, they abandoned the allegedly sacred alleged principle of the National Health Service by introducing charges for prescriptions (although this was not implemented until 1962, under a Tory government) and then for spectacles and dentures. The list of broken promises and abandoned principles grew longer almost by the day.

Unfamiliar case

Nationally there was a lot of dismay and resentment among Labour Party members at the massive betrayal of their dream of a more equal, more caring society which they had worked so hard for. For example a motion at their 1946 Conference complained about the "apparent continuance of a traditionally Conservative Party policy of power politics abroad". But such doubts had absolutely no effect on the government.

By 1947 it was clear to me that I was wasting my time in the Labour Party. The war had politicised me, as it had so many other people (although too many of them used it for different ends, staying with Labour Party through thick and thin) and I wanted a classless society based on human interests and not on production for profit or on discredited notions about patriotism and international power and influence. That left the question of what I should do. For a while I swirled around on the political surface, bobbing up against one party after another but never feeling good about any of them. Until one Saturday evening in summer when on our local green, a kind of mini Speakers' Corner, I heard this man speaking from an unfamiliar platform, putting an unfamiliar case about a moneyless world without leaders, with free access to wealth. ■

IVAN





Voice from the Back

Brazilian Genocide

Brazil had an estimated six million indigenous people when the Portuguese arrived in 1500. Today there are 700,000 out of a population of 183 million. Indian tribes have been frequent victims of massacres and agents from Brazil's National Indian Foundation fear that more tribal groups are in danger of genocide. They base this on a local court ruling lifting the protection order on tribal lands that allows loggers and ranchers new access. "A boom in prices for South American beef, soy and timber has sparked a surge in land grabs directed against indigenous groups by ranchers and loggers in other parts of the continent as well." (*Times*, 18 May) More profits equal more deaths, it was ever so.

The Crazy Society

Only capitalism with its rapacious drive to make money could produce the following crazy situation. "White wristbands sold by the Make Poverty History coalition were made in Chinese factories accused of using forced labour, it has been disclosed. The fashionable white wristbands, worn by celebrities and politicians, including Tony Blair, were made for a coalition of charities as a symbol of its 2005 campaign to end extreme poverty." (*Independent*, 30 May) As long as there is a couple of bucks to be made, there is nothing the owning class won't stoop to!



The wristband socialists would like to see - and not made in a sweatshop either.

The New Elite

"South Africa's mining magnates and millionaires have been meeting in the imposing Rand Club in downtown Johannesburg for more than a century. ... Built on the wealth of the largest goldmine in the world and the sweat of black labour, the club's membership was, until a few years ago, closed to South Africa's blacks. But these days, there's a new breed of tycoon walking the club's wood-panelled corridors and sipping whiskey in its stuffed leather chairs. A black elite has crossed over from politics and the ruling African National Congress (ANC). Rand Club members over the

past few years have included Cyril Ramaphosa, 52, one of South Africa's richest men, who was once touted as a possible successor to Nelson Mandela, and Tokyo Sexwale, also 52, another politician turned capitalist." (*Time*, 6 June) The result of all those years of sacrifice and effort by workers to get rid of apartheid has come to this!

Rich Pickings

The gap between the rich and the rest of society is widening all the time as the research in the USA by

The New York Times indicates. "A new breed of fabulously rich American is leaving the rest of the country far behind, in part because of President Bush's tax cuts. The "hyper-rich", 145,000 taxpayers earning an average \$3 million (£1.65 million) a year, have seen their earnings soar while their tax burden has decreased significantly in recent years. Their share of the national

income has doubled in the past 20 years while 90 per cent of taxpayers have seen their share fall." (*Times*, 6 June) The report goes on to give some examples of



Laughing all the way to the bank - Allen & Gates

the wealth of these capitalists - Bill Gates, Microsoft owner \$48 billion, Warren Buffett, investment magnate \$41 billion, Paul Allen, Microsoft co-founder \$20 billion and five members of the Walton family (Wal-Mart owners) \$18 billion each. Land of the free?

How The Other 5 Percent Live

As you worry about paying the rent, the mortgage or your payments on the credit card think about the owning class and their problems. "Mrs Wildenstien told her lawyers; during a cruise in the West Indies, the family's yacht was caught up in a storm. The crew tried to enter ports in Haiti and San Domingo but these were too small for the vessel. Finally, they struggled into a bay in one of the Virgin Islands. To mark their lucky survival, Daniel bought the island." (*Observer*, 12 June) See how lucky you are, fellow workers. You don't own a yacht too big to get in to Haiti or San Domingo, do you?



Typical worker's yacht, perhaps?

Free lunch

by Rigg



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London Bombings
Economic Rise of China
Global Poverty
Belfort Bax and Eleanor Marx
The Problem with Capitalism
New Labour: New Leader

Praise God...

and pass the ammo

The London Bombings



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Economic Reformist Diang Xiaping, page 10



Taking Bax to task : Eleanor Marx, page 12

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The Socialist Party of Great Britain

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"Terrorist insurgency is not an instinctive reaction to injustice, but a policy choice both for footsoldiers and generals alike."

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Bombings, Bombers and a Bomb

The recent traumatic events in London provide a poignant reminder of the depths of anger, frustration and outrage simmering beneath the outward demeanour of many people who are leading apparently normal lives. When such extreme acts of violence, with their tragic repercussions, happen so close to home, they understandably impinge more acutely on our consciousness and touch us in a far more personal way. Straightaway our thoughts become crowded with the names and faces of any family or friends who might possibly have been travelling near the affected area and we anxiously seek assurance of their wellbeing.

Fortunately such barbarous occurrences remain comparatively rare in London or the other major cities of Western Europe but in some parts of the world, alas, they are an almost daily experience.

Any half-decent, sensible human being quite properly deplores the invidious, misguided zeal - be it personal, political or religious - that spawns such a terrible, unreasoning thirst for bloody retribution in the name of whatever injustice or absolute truth. Political leaders, of course, waste no time in making a sanctimonious response by roundly condemning the "evil terrorists" and "brain-washed fanatics". Doubtless their perception of the public mood is accurate but the weasel words of politicians assuming the high moral ground are an unwelcome encroachment. They intrude upon the very real sympathy and feeling of

support we reserve for the victims of such atrocities by inducing another kind of feeling altogether: one of profound nausea.

The breathtaking hypocrisy with which these serial perpetrators of ultimate, officially sanctioned, state violence, denounce those who, unofficially, pursue similar tactics - which, though horrendous, are on a far smaller scale - is truly stomach-churning. They uniformly assert that only warped minds, with a callous disregard for human life, would deliberately choose to detonate bombs in an environment (such as a tube train) specifically selected to cause the most damaging effects and indiscriminately kill or injure the greatest possible number. And without giving any prior warning. And in the rush hour when the maximum number of people would be exposed.

State-approved violence has been



Hiroshima

responsible for tens of millions of deaths. The ethics of "legitimate" or "just" war have no bottom line. If there ever was such a bottom line, the saturation bombing of Hamburg, Dresden and Tokyo, generating the new military tactic of fire-storms, certainly plummeted below it. These raids resulted in vast numbers of victims exceeding by far any previous tally.

Sixty years ago, this month, on the 6th August 1945, the Japanese city of Hiroshima was virtually flattened - unnecessarily - by a single atomic bomb carried by a single plane. Three days later, another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

The city of Hiroshima was specifically selected (though obviously not by warped minds with a callous disregard for human life) as a target with an environment likely to cause the most damaging effects and indiscriminately kill or injure the greatest possible number. Many of its buildings were composed of paper, wood and straw. Mock-up structures built from similar materials had earlier been erected in the Utah desert for testing incendiary potential. Also, Hiroshima had been spared any previous aerial bombardment so that the precise effects of the explosion could be determined.

The bomb was dropped at 8.15 am, without prior warning. In the rush hour when the maximum number of people were exposed. The official recorded number of deaths from the bomb is 186, 940.

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U p i n s m o k e ?

The End of Mass Production ?

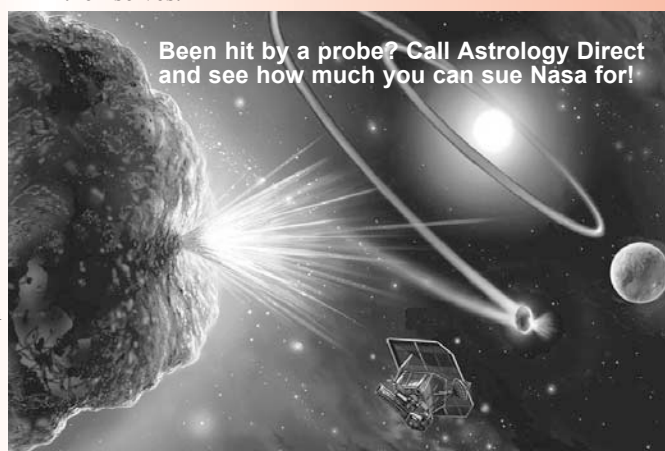
Is Socialist Theory Scientific?

"Nobody has yet proven that this experiment was safe," says Marina Bay's lawyer Alexander Molokhov, in the first day's Moscow hearing of the amateur astrologist's £170m lawsuit against Nasa, launched hours after the successful collision of the probe Deep Impact into the comet Tempel 1. Bay's claim that such cosmological 'vandalism' has altered the world's horoscope towards possible disaster can also not be proved false, and such lack of proof is clearly enough in the eyes of some lawyers to start proceedings these days, notwithstanding Nasa mission engineer Shadan Ardalan's curt dismissal: "The analogy is a mosquito hitting the front of an airliner in flight. The effect is negligible." (BBC News Online, 4 July).

The Moscow court is unlikely to be bamboozled by such chancers, but the attack on science is common enough: don't do it unless you can prove it is safe. The problem is that science, with the usual exception of mathematics, can never actually prove anything, an apparent loophole exploited by everyone from 9/11 conspiracy theorists to neo-creationist

Intelligent Design advocates. Now the law is being asked to test the assertion that astronomers can't prove while astrologers don't have to.

Socialists have every sympathy with scientists who find themselves under attack from unscientific prejudice and blatant opportunism, since this is not very dissimilar from our own experience. For a theory to be valid it should accord well with the facts, and offer one a way to disprove it. Thus religion and creationism are not valid scientific theories, whereas evolution and gravity are. Socialist theory fits the first criterion, but what about the second? Is it possible to disprove it? Perhaps. If capitalism fed, clothed and looked after its people in peace and without coercion, socialism would not be disproved but it would be unnecessary. If genetic research uncovers an irreducible aggression or profit-seeking gene, socialism could be said to have been disproved. But nobody has yet found this gene, or shown any other evidence that would make socialism unviable. Meanwhile, like Marina Bay and her enterprising lawyer, our opponents expect us to prove everything we say while they are not obliged to provide any evidence in support of their argument, and indeed airily dismiss the very large volume of evidence against themselves.



Been hit by a probe? Call Astrology Direct and see how much you can sue Nasa for!

A big question for socialist theorists is the matter of parts and supplies. While much of food production is likely to be localised, some highly specialised parts and accessories are not going to be generally available in the region. Global transportation would be a last and expensive resort, but what if many specialist machine components could simply be ... emailed?

A new generation of 3D printers is making it possible to recreate perfect three-dimensional objects from a software template which can be posted through an ordinary email server. At present the 'ink' is confined to wax and plaster powder so the finished models have limited durability, but work is already proceeding with fine-grain steel using micro-heat welding instead of glue to hold the finished article together, and laser and water-jet cutters using emailed plans can work on heavy durable materials to make components as good as traditionally machined parts.

In fact, with the rise of fabrication laboratories, or 'fab labs', individuals can have their own designs and specifications custom-made on the spot (Scientific American, June 2005). Once the labs have shrunk from room-size to suitcases, we may be looking at the democratization - for a price - of the production process, or in fact, the reclaiming - within limits - of the means of production. The idea that mass production may be on its way out is not new: "Mass production, the defining characteristic of

the Second Wave economy, becomes increasingly obsolete, as firms install information-intensive, often robotised manufacturing systems capable of endless, cheap variation, even customisation. The revolutionary result is, in effect, the de-massification of mass production." War and Anti-War - Alvin & Heidi Toffler (1993, Little, Brown and Co).

Being toffs who hang around with generals, politicians, think-tank drivers and other assorted toffs, the Tofflers are never overly concerned with how their capitalist utopia will impact on the lower orders, so they describe in perfect equanimity a Third Wave capitalism which even by today's standards

would be a catastrophe for workers, with widespread 'oceans of poverty' around 'hi-tech archipelagos' such as California, Hong Kong or the Rhineland.

Capitalism's development of customised production could hardly be expected to benefit the toiling masses for whom mass-production is both a treadmill and a treat factory. They would never be able to afford the luxury of individual consumer targetting. Nonetheless, the ability to micro-produce with minimal waste and distribution costs remains one of the most exciting innovations socialist society could possibly inherit, and one which it could put to very good use.



3D printers are soon likely to be suitcase size. Inset: some printed objects.

What about human nature?

Dear Editors

Reading the article "Talk about Socialism" in July's *Socialist Standard* I began to wonder in what, and how many, different ways socialists approach the argument of "human nature".

"People are naturally lazy /greedy/ aggressive", etc. - how easily these phrases trip off the tongue, usually before the brain has been put into gear. Aren't we all at some time, in certain circumstances, lazy, greedy, aggressive? I would suggest we are all a complex blend of "general psychological characteristics, feelings and behavioural traits" (Concise Oxford Dictionary re. Human nature).

These are some of my "human nature-an alternative view"-

Cooperation - currently in the majority world subsistence farmers and the like already cooperate in family groups to provide basic needs, not buying and selling but simply producing.

Cooperation/hospitality - many cultures in the world have a very strong family/community welfare ethos and base their daily lives on working together for the benefit of all. Most of these people live in the majority world and although they have little they share what they have (even with strangers).

Generosity and Compassion - from the minority world where most people's lives are generally less harsh a large number of people willingly donate (money) on a regular basis in the hope of easing other people's difficulties, e.g. child sponsorship, AIDS programmes, clean water programmes.

Compassion/Empathy - in areas/times of major/natural disasters volunteers are never lacking, nor slow to offer assistance, whether practical or monetary.

Giving/Sharing - huge armies of regular volunteers at home and abroad are at work to help and improve people's lives, e.g. lifts to hospitals; shopping for the old or disabled; youth workers in clubs and sports associations; parents' associations linked to schools, playschools etc. for better education and facilities; organizers of charity events.

Yes, a lot of this is to raise money! Because that is the system now. But these are examples of people giving time freely to organize events, bake cakes, engage in sports and other promotional events for altruistic reasons.

Sharing - cooperatives of consumers in local areas putting in time on a regular basis to benefit themselves and the community.

Cooperation - bartering systems where people swap skills-a few hours ironing for the repair of a water leak.

An observation about retired, i.e. not-working-for-money people: many will say it's the best time of their lives and that they don't have enough time to fit everything in. And what are they doing? They are often involved in the kind of activities they actually enjoy, taking care of the grandchildren, helping out even older folk in the community, growing vegetables, involving themselves in ongoing educational projects, having an occasional holiday. In fact, generally playing a part in the community in ways which would admirably suit a socialist society.

So, as far as things are now, in this non-socialist, totally capitalist world, yes, of course there are those who are 'lazy', 'greedy',

'aggressive' and I believe volumes could be and have been written by anthropologists giving perfectly good reasons for such behaviours in our concrete jungles and human zoos.

I prefer to call attention to the industriousness, generosity, and compassionate aspects of human nature.

Working together for the common good?

Yes!

People can do it, people do do it - it's all part of that wonderful diversity called Human Nature.

JANET SURMAN, TURKEY

Nothing's changed

Dear Editors

Twenty years ago, there was a high profile pop concert organised by the Live Aid group, to help the famine in Ethiopia. Now two decades later nothing has changed.

The Live 8 concerts addressed the effects of poverty not its causes. Unless the present social system has changed, for many more decades down the line there will be more Live Aids, more G8 summits on this poor continent, and more Bonos and Bob Geldofs, yet all their cries for billions to be spent on aid are still unlikely to make more than the smallest dent in the deprivation.

Although there is criminal incompetence of Africa's post-colonial black elites (the people who call themselves presidents, prime ministers, and in some instances kings and princes of the continent have waged war on their own people and plundered the continent's wealth to ever bulging Bank account in Switzerland), the main problem of the continent is capitalism.

It is common knowledge that up to two-thirds of the world's population are hungry, while millions actually die from starvation each year. Why in a world of potential plenty is so elementary a human need as food neglected for some many people?

Some would deny that we live in a world of plenty and claim that the cause of world hunger is natural scarcity. That in other words, some people starve simply because not enough food can be produced.

In the present state scientific knowledge and productive techniques, enough food could be produced adequately to feed the population of the world.

World malnutrition then is not a natural but a social problem. Its cause must be sought not in any lack of natural resources but in the way society is organised. World society everywhere rests on the basis of the resources of the world, natural and manufactured, by very rich minorities.

Rock stars or any other celebrities will not persuade the rich class to make world poverty history. It's in fact the world market system that ruled the world. Acting like a natural force beyond human control, it has much power than any national government.

The market creates an artificial scarcity and organised waste that is responsible for poverty and hunger in the world today. The law that governs everywhere is "no profit, no production".

MICHAEL GHEBRE, LONDON NW1

Letter to Bob

Dear Editors

Below is a letter I sent to Bob Geldof.

Dear Bob,

I deeply respect your sincerity in campaigning for the end of poverty through the world. My understanding of poverty is the insufficiency of the necessities of life leading to an inability to enjoy the wealth potentially able to be created in abundance by humankind, including leisure pursuits, the arts and the basic necessities including shelter, warmth, food and water and the freedom from illness. This deprivation leads inevitably to hunger and disease. I believe that this insufficiency is largely caused by money.

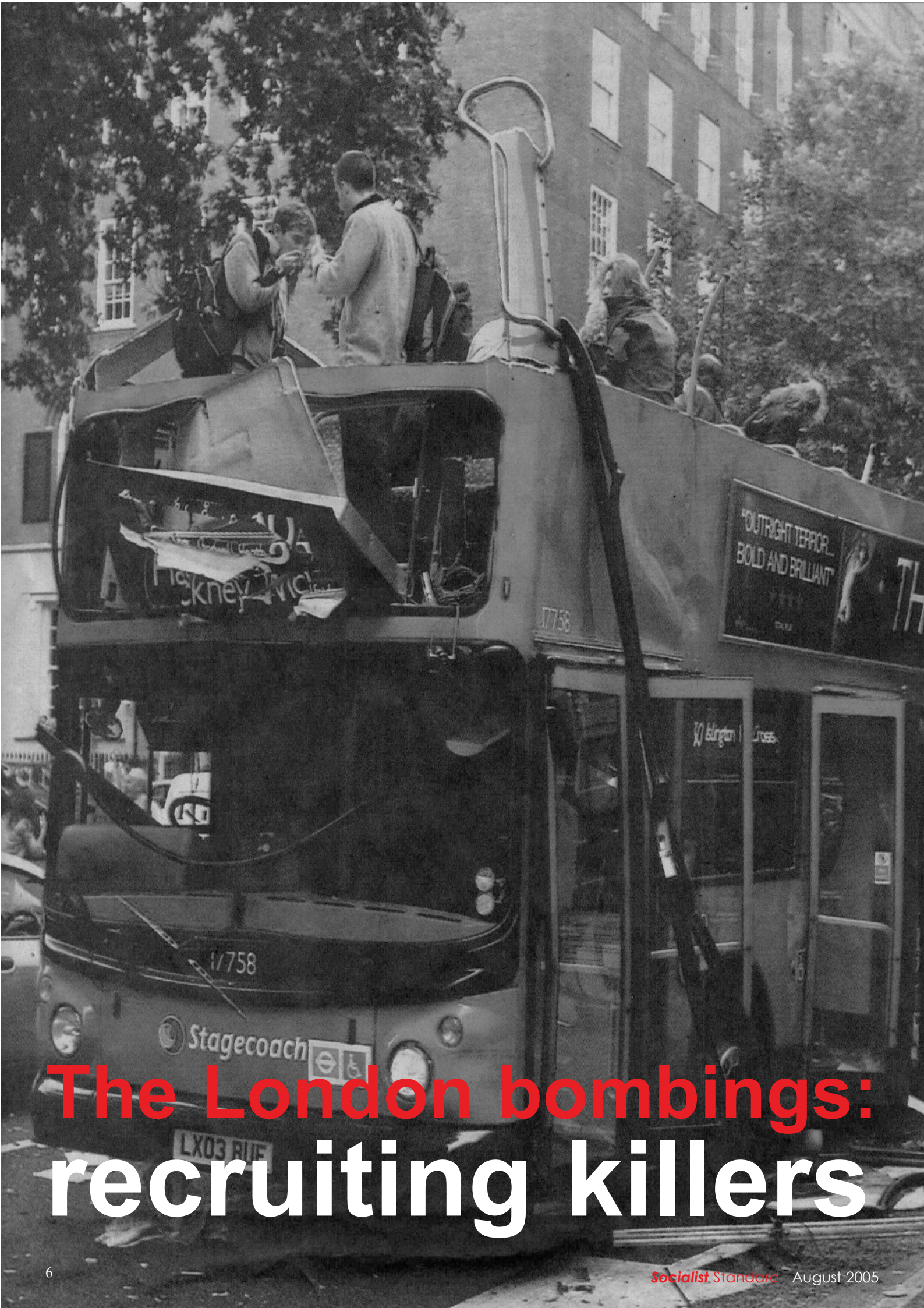
As I am sure you will agree, it is important to understand that wide-scale hunger and even famine can occur when the available food supplies are not necessarily less than sufficient to feed the people they should be intended for. For example the well-known study of the 1943 Bengal Famine by Amartya Sen, which I am sure you are familiar with, showed this clearly. Other famines in recent times have occurred when there has been a sufficiency of food. Indeed food exporting from Ethiopia continued during the famine of the 1980's.

It is also important to understand that not all the population of an area affected by hunger will go hungry. It is often what has been called 'entitlement' that denies access to the available food. Under the present way of ordering Society this entitlement can be determined by money or barter and not necessarily by a person's need for food. Having money alone that would ordinarily secure enough of the basics does not always ensure sufficient access to those basics as, for example, when there is a shortage caused by 'natural' or human factors. Generally, as with anything else, when there is perceived to be a shortage, the 'value' of goods and services (including food) rises. Because of the way things are ordered it is the poorest who suffer most when the price of commodities rises. Therefore Poverty can be said to cause hunger and hunger to cause poverty, because hunger weakens resistance to disease, which in turn leads to an increasing tendency to an inability on the part of its victims to tend to their needs.

As things are presently ordered, therefore, there is an advantage to those who control the availability of essentials and who in some way or other profit from their sale to regulate the supply of goods and services anywhere in the world.

If the products of human labour and indeed the plentiful raw materials throughout the world - including Africa - were freely available to those who needed them and indeed to those who help make them available for human consumption without the intervention of money or any other limiting factor imposed by a minority of humans then there could not be need of any kind, much less catastrophes like famines. Where there were factors held to be beyond the immediate control of humankind, for example floods or droughts, then the technology presently widely available could be used to ameliorate their worst effects. Water can be transported, sea water can be desalinated, rivers can, to some extent, be contained in their capacity to

continued on page 18



The London bombings: recruiting killers



Far left: the scene in Tavistock Square moments after the explosion. Left and below: relatives of suicide bomb victims in London and Iraq grieve their losses

It's not hard to see military recruitment going on. American comic books have full page adverts exhorting readers to become an 'Army of one'.

Documentary-makers have followed US recruiters visiting poorer neighbourhoods offering education, prospects, a future. In the UK on high streets, recruiters put up boards showing abseiling, skiing, diving - anything other than riddling another human being with bullets or shrapnel.

The army has historically been a way out for the poor and powerless. A source of empowerment (or at least of feeling that someone somewhere is in control), of belonging, of being part of a corporate body and a story of positive action and values.

It's a tragic irony of humanity that the statues and memorials for military murderers are almost invariably bigger, better and more splendid than others. Battles - like Trafalgar - are commemorated, whereas anniversaries on the first use of anaesthetic would pass us by unmarked except by ultra-enthusiasts.

The glorification of those who die in battle is a near constant of any military society. London is disfigured with a war memorial dedicated 'To the glorious dead' - as if there was ever anything glorious about a nineteen-year old boy hanging on the barbed wire. To die nobly is often rewarded with a Victoria Cross. Dying in action is always referred to as sacrifice, a gift from the soldier to the community. For the First World War, Felicia Hemans' The boy stood on the burning deck, a poem about a young sailor dying at his post, was used in recruitment drives in this country.

The actions, then, of the four young men, three of them from Leeds, in callously slaughtering over fifty fellow humans, are not so alien as some would think at first. Shehad Tanweer, Hasib Hussain, Mohammed Sadiq Khan, from Leeds, were all described by their stunned friends and relatives, as perfectly ordinary, nice and polite young men. Not bug-eyed ranting fanatics.

The psychological hunt has begun to understand their motives - experts in terrorism discuss how suicide murderers require a wide support network to cajole and reassure them, assist them and point them in the right direction. People look to fanatical Islamic preachers, or the visits to Pakistan made by some of these boys when their families thought they were going off rails - trained in one of the Madrassa theological schools there.

The West Yorkshire metropolis - like many post-industrial northern towns - has deep cultural divisions. These were exposed some years back in 2001 with the Bradford riots, after which there were claims that the local Asians who turned out



to fight against fascists were given disproportionate sentences. The communities live in the same towns, but do not mix, and so distrust is sown between white-skinned and brown-skinned workers' families. Otherwise sensible people will tell tales of the shocking conduct of the other community.

These areas are scenes of depoliticisation - Leeds and Bradford have some of the lowest turnouts in elections. The area of Leeds that Tanweer was from has almost double the unemployment of other parts of the city. He himself left school with virtually no qualifications.

Relatives and friends talk of how young men who come back from Pakistan are shocked by the poverty they witness there. Others have talked of how it is not difficult to feel solidarity with the people they identify with - with Muslims who are oppressed in other parts of the world. They can draw a line between that poverty and oppression and their own experiences. It is not beyond wit or reason to see how these young men might become inclined to join up.

All it requires then is someone wealthy enough, organised enough to provide them with training and chemical explosives and equipment. Someone ruthless enough to be willing to send suicide murderers into crowds of people totally unconnected to their grievances simply to send a message to the powerful. Although it is unlikely the London attack was directly the responsibility of Saudi Arabian capitalist Osama Bin Laden, the profile of the leadership of the Islamic movement is very much one of aspirant, educated, relatively wealthy men from frustrated elites across the Arab world.

Just as rulers and wannabe rulers throughout the ages have used religion as a motivator, to provide the appearance of a common cause between them and their

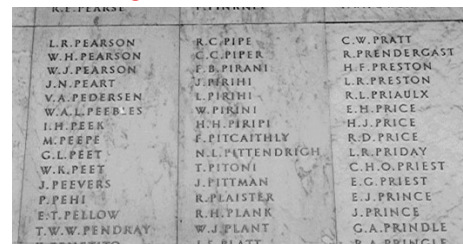
potential recruits, so too do the modern day variety, attempting to build a coalition of people from many different backgrounds based on the historical experience of Islamic culture. Incorporating their local grievances into a single paranoiac cloth whereby America, Zionists and 'crusaders' were the cause of all ills was an integral part of that project.

The left - monomaniacal as ever - see this as 'the violence of the oppressed', as objectively anti-imperialist. After the London bombings, the Socialist Workers Party studiously avoided condemning them. A chorus has gone up that Britain should change its foreign policy, pull out of Iraq and Afghanistan, to stop us being targets. This of course is no real solution - the war would go on if not here in other parts of the world - and young Yorkshiremen would travel to other parts of the world to join this fight. Terrorist insurgency is not an instinctive reaction to injustice, but a policy choice both for footsoldiers and generals alike.

Religion is the heart's cry of the oppressed, soul of a soulless world, it inspires utopian and thus reactionary politics. It cannot be stopped by suppression, harassment, the silencing of radical preachers - that would only aid and abet the feeling of persecution. It must be defeated by reason, by practical action to demonstrate that there are prospects for taking control of their own lives.

This means an open movement desperately needs to be built to create a real prospect of change, not just in the UK but in the world. We cannot rely on military force, or the state, the great and the good bullying moderate Muslims to speak out, it needs to come from the massed ranks of workers, set on using their creative industry to take real control of the world around us. An end to oppression, and an end to ambitious elites using human corpses as stepping stones to wealth and power. ■
Pik Smeets

Below: the glorious dead?



The making of global poverty

Why is the Third World always third? Why are 'developing countries' still not developed, when the West is doing so well? Why are so many of them poor, and have they always been that way? Is it just their fault? A look at history reveals a different story, and one which explains the real origins of western prosperity.

It is sometimes called the Third World, though now expressions such as 'the South' or 'the Majority World' are felt to be more acceptable. Equally, 'developing countries' is seen as more accurate than 'underdeveloped'. Yet whatever label is used,

it cannot be denied that much of the Earth's population endure lives of poverty and squalor, of undernourishment that often crosses into famine, of insecurity and lack of opportunity. Their lives are often brutally short, with life expectancy far below that in wealthier countries (just 37 years in Sierra Leone, for instance, against a global average of 67 years). Each year around 14 million children die in the Third World, mostly from entirely preventable diseases. But such conditions have not always existed, nor has there always been such a chasm between rich and poor parts of the world. For capitalism created, or at least exacerbated, these inequalities, by the way in which it

exploited pre-capitalist



Lavish - the British in India



Homo universalis impeccuniensis - around since the dawn of property society

societies as it was expanding across the globe in search of markets, raw materials and labour.

The slave trade, for instance, was perhaps the worst example - it can only euphemistically be called a 'trade'. Labour supplies were needed in the new colonies, especially in the Caribbean, but the native inhabitants were not strong or healthy enough to provide this. The solution was to ship labour power from Africa, not as 'voluntary' immigrants but as slaves, captured in battle or purchased from local rulers, transported in appalling conditions and forced to work

on plantations. British capitalism in particular benefited from the slave trade: its products and profits helped towns like Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol to develop industries such as shipbuilding, cotton processing and sugar refining, for colonies were forced to send their produce to England and forbidden to manufacture anything locally. Banks such as Barclays and Barings were set up with profits from slavery. 'The West Indian islands', says Eric Williams, writing of the late eighteenth century in *Capitalism and Slavery*, 'became the hub of the British Empire, of immense importance to the grandeur and prosperity of England.' And at the same time Africa was impoverished, as it was usually the youngest and fittest who were abducted, thus depopulating the land and leaving the old or infirm, who could not cultivate the farms adequately. Africa's population scarcely grew between 1650 and 1900, while Europe's increased fourfold.

In addition, the Third World was a source of raw materials which fed the ever-growing demands of European capitalism. Africa, for instance, supplied groundnuts, cotton and rubber (nowadays it's diamonds, timber, oil and rare metals). Profits from all this were repatriated, leading to further development in Europe rather than in Africa. Cotton goods and soft furnishings manufactured in India were enormously popular in seventeenth-century Europe. But the cloth industries in India, Africa and elsewhere were deliberately destroyed, primarily by British capitalism,



Cooking the Books (1)

Putting business first

President George Bush II is nothing if not frank, at least on the Kyoto Treaty. Interviewed by Sir Trevor McDonald on the eve of

last month's G8 summit (ITV, 4 July) he had this to say of this treaty which aims to timidly limit carbon emissions (one of the contributory causes of the current global warming):

"I made the decision . . . that the Kyoto treaty didn't suit our needs. In other words, the

Kyoto treaty would have wrecked our economy, if I can be blunt . . . I walked away from Kyoto because it would damage America's economy, you bet. It would have destroyed our economy. It was a lousy deal for the American economy."

As the head of US capitalism's political executive, his remit is to protect and further the interests of the US capitalist class. The reason why he and his advisers decided that the Kyoto Treaty would have damaged the US economy was that America gets a higher proportion of energy from burning coal and oil than its rivals, so that any commitment to use other, more expensive sources of energy

would have cost the US proportionately more than these rivals and so reduced its competitiveness vis-à-vis them.

That Kyoto would have advantaged their economies compared to America may even have been at the back of the minds of the European political leaders who promoted the treaty. If so, they miscalculated and may now find that it is their economies that are going to be disadvantaged.

In any event, while it is clear that a question which concerns the whole world such as the possible consequences of global warming can be effectively dealt with only by unified action at a world level, it is equally clear that

both to do away with potential rivals and to open up new markets. In one area of the Philippines, for instance, the British vice-consul deliberately forced the replacement of locally-produced textiles with machine-made British ones, and encouraged production of sugar for export. All in all, Third World industry was undermined or at least kept on a low level while western capitalism forged ahead, partly on the basis of its colonial profits. In 1830, China was responsible for 30 percent of world manufacturing output, and India for 17 percent; by 1900, these shares were down to 6 percent and under 2 percent, respectively, while over the same period Europe's share rose from 34 percent to 63 percent.

The end of the nineteenth century saw widespread droughts and famines, the Late Victorian Holocausts of Mike Davis' book. Though figures can only be estimates, perhaps fifty million died in China, India and Brazil alone, as food was exported to the West, and local agriculture was disrupted by a mixture of ignorance and intent. In North Africa in the 1870s, peasants were forced to sell their livestock cheap to French dealers in order to stave off starvation in the short term. In other cases new taxes that had to be paid in money were introduced, forcing peasants to become wage-labourers. While the British rulers of India were lavishly celebrating Victoria's sixty years as queen in 1897, wheat was being exported to Britain or left to rot in railway sidings, and poorhouses were being set up to further punish the destitute. (The Socialist Party's predecessor organisation, the Social Democratic Federation, was the only grouping that consistently protested against the suffering being inflicted on India's peasants.)

One of the most notorious events of the Western creation of the Third World

was the Scramble for Africa (which can be roughly dated 1876-1912). This took place partly for strategic reasons: Britain needed to control both the Cape of Good Hope and the Suez Canal in order to ensure access to its Indian Empire. In addition, tropical produce was being exported to Europe, and there were many raw materials available cheaply - Germany needed access to cotton, oil, cocoa and rubber, for instance. Revenue could be boosted by taking over the tax and rental income of local 'chiefs', and forced labour



Salisbury - carving up Africa

could only increase profits. King Leopold of Belgium's exploitation of the Congo, supposedly carried out to do away with the remnants of slavery, was the most extreme example. Edmond Morel, the journalist who exposed the extent of Leopold's scheming, described what was happening as 'a secret society of murderers with a King for a croniman'. African rulers often gave their lands away in return for old rifles and strings of beads, or unknowingly signed a treaty in English or French that contained different provisions from that in the local language. Lord Salisbury, British Prime Minister during much of the Scramble, prided himself that Africa had been carved up with no European power firing a shot against another (and African troops employed by Europeans did much of the actual fighting against other Africans). Salisbury's policies served the British ruling class well:

'He had certainly made sure that the lion's share of new colonies and protectorates - fifteen out of thirty - went to Britain. If his preoccupation had always

been to give Britain the strategic advantage, it was fortunate for Britain that he also gave it most of Africa's most profitable territory: the gold-mines of the Transvaal, the teeming markets of the Niger, the tea and coffee of Uganda, the cotton of Egypt and the Sudan.' (Thomas Pakenham: *The Scramble for Africa*)

Thus British capitalism benefited at the same time as Africa was impoverished.

All in all, it cannot be argued that underdevelopment is due to Third World countries not (yet) enjoying the benefits of capitalism, that they have missed out on development by missing out on capitalism. The truth is that their current condition is a result of the role they played in the development of capitalism. Africa and many parts of Asia and South America, were colonised, formally or informally, for the sake of the European powers, whose ruling classes grew rich on the profits of this exploitation, in addition to the surplus value they extracted from workers 'at home'. ■

PAUL BENNETT

Africa: a Marxian Analysis

A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from *The Socialist Standard*. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis is applied to:

- State and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Tribalism
- Colonialism and Capitalism
- Religion, Race and Class
- Sharia Law in Nigeria

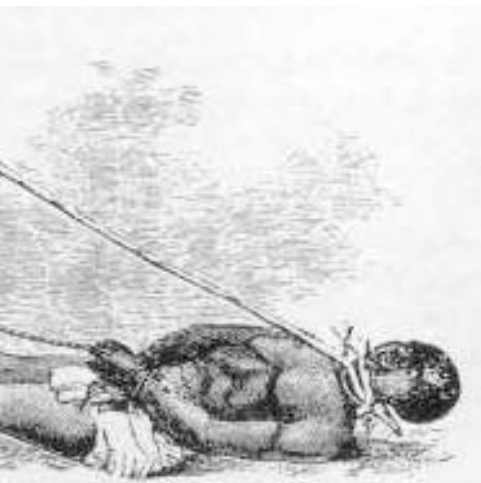
■ Early 20th Century South Africa



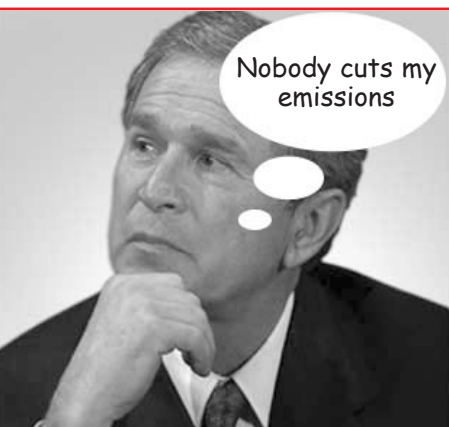
Available from **The Socialist Party**, 52 Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN.

£1 (£1.35 by post).

Cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain"



Sketch of a West African slave, c. 1887



this is not going to happen under capitalism. The different capitalist states into which the world is divided have different - and clashing - interests, such as have come to the surface over Kyoto, which they will always put first. At most, all that can happen under capitalism when a global problem arises is "much too little, much too late".

That the leaders of the capitalist States of Europe are just as willing (if not just as frank about it) as Bush to put the interests of their capitalist class first when it comes to environmental problems was shown by a headline in the Times the following day: "Europe drops green agenda to put life back

into industry". The article reported that, under pressure from governments and from business lobbies, the European Commission has put off proposals to deal with the problem of air pollution:

"The shelving of the environment strategies marks a triumph for the British Government, which has called on the Commission to stop producing regulations that damage businesses. An impact assessment had suggested that the air-pollution strategy alone would cost between €5.9 billion and €14.9 billion a year from 2020".

Enough said.

Enter the

Town v country

In rural regions, where over 60 percent of the population still live, the free market deregulation of agricultural prices has driven millions from the land. Here, over 150 million destitute people are waiting to migrate and seek work at any

wage, while farmers are often compelled to take unskilled temporary work between harvests to supplement meagre earnings.

It will take 15-20 years to absorb this labour power, which means that, unlike some parts of South-East Asia, where labour scarcity could raise wages, Chinese based capitalism can probably hold down unskilled wages for many years.

To most the transition from state-run capitalism to the free market variety means low wages, poor living conditions and repression. While a minority of higher paid workers has access to consumable goods, the free market has devastated the lower paid who do not have money to buy those goods. Services including education and medical care, formerly provided by the state, are now 'fee based', while housing is controlled by private landlords.

The main manufacturing belt lies in the region of Guangdong and along the Pearl River Delta, where workers slave 15 hours a day, seven days a week with mandatory overtime enforced by coercive factory regulations. Migrant labour is estimated at over 100 million, more than half women from impoverished inland regions. Industrial disputes are not uncommon.

Contradictions

Sometimes disputes erupt into riots as happened at the Taiwanese Stella International factory at Dongguan in the spring of 2004. The factory, employing 70,000 workers, makes shoes for Nike, Reebok, Clarks, Sears and Timberland.

Migrant worker - China on the move



Women gluing training shoes without masks in the world's largest sweatshop

In 1978 the Chinese Communist Party under Deng Xiaoping embarked on reforms that would steer China's economy toward transition from state-run to free market capitalism.

Since then China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown by an average of 9.5 percent per year, faster than any other country. China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in December 2001 and now accounts for 13 percent of world output with a GDP likely to overtake Japan by 2016 and America by 2020, making China the world's largest economy.

Economic "openness"

This prodigious growth is attributable to foreign investment that has utilised the country's remarkably 'liberal' business climate to exploit low wage labour as a platform for the manufacture of goods and then their export to world at cheap prices. Put simply, manufacturing has been relocated to China to undercut competition and raise profits - attracted by the almost 'inexhaustible' supply of cheap labour, well-developed infrastructure, tax concessions and brutally repressive state.

China's economic 'openness' makes it the world's largest recipient of foreign investment, which increased 35 percent in the year to September 2004 alone. It is further exemplified by the country's import tariffs, which "have, on average, fallen from 41 percent in 1992 to 6 percent after it joined the WTO in December 2001, giving it the lowest tariff protection of any developing country." (The Economist, 2 October 2004, p.6)

Joint ventures between Chinese companies and foreign multinational corporations produce 27 percent of manufacturing output (there are 4,000 involving UK companies alone) and a flourishing private sector accounts for 50 percent of Chinese GDP.

Rich v poor

Although most of the population still exists at basic subsistence levels, the purchasing power of a minority of better paid workers (but still measured in tens of millions) and the development of an

indigenous capitalist class have nurtured a sizeable domestic market. China in fact has the world's fastest growing consumer market and sales are soaring. If income distribution remains unaltered, "by 2020 the top 100 million households will have an average income equivalent to the current average in Western Europe. This will open up a vast market for consumer goods." (The Economist, 2 October 2004, p.11) An increasing number of American and European corporations are now investing to sell directly to this growing market.

China's market has also encouraged the emergence of a Chinese capitalist class, comprising many who already have close ties with foreign capital and political patronage from Beijing. Within this class a small number have amassed staggering levels of wealth.

This picture looks set to continue. Though productivity is still low compared with the developed world, running at approximately one-eighth of that in America, economic 'openness' is encouraging the rapid transfer of manufacturing technology that will enable China to use the industrialised countries as a springboard to raise productivity. Production will also rapidly climb the "value added" chain, utilising the 10 million graduates who join the Chinese working class each year.

But more important is the abundant supply of the resource essential to profits - human labour power. China has a population of 1.3 billion or 20 percent of the world's population and the political elite has worked hard to mobilise this labour power to create the conditions to fuel capitalism.

State industry has rapidly shrunk and thousands of enterprises have been sold or bankrupted and their workers sacked. An estimated 40 million have been made jobless to join the countless millions made redundant from native private industry by relentless foreign competition.



Dragon

Factory property was allegedly damaged and ten workers were subsequently jailed for 3½ years but later freed when the company, fearful of repercussions, secured their release.

Long-term disregard for poverty and the impoverished plight of working people and peasantry may well pose a significant threat to government authority. The government has been compelled to ameliorate worker conditions and in some places unemployment insurance has improved and minimum wages increased, while cities have endeavoured to increase employment - generally by offering assistance to new enterprises to employ redundant workers. But funding is still minimal and official corruption widespread.

Nowhere is the contrast between rich and poor more stark than in Shanghai, a city of 17 million and the centre of Chinese capitalism. Here poor living conditions, overcrowding and poverty are "...a far cry from the empty streets of the gated communities in the east end of Pudong, where high walls and a plethora of guards provide a safe, insular heaven for those living within." (China Daily, 28 April 2005)

One of China's main weaknesses is electricity generation and the rapid increase in demand, exacerbated by household appliances and air-conditioning, has caused shortages, blackouts and power rationing. China's electricity generation is 70 percent dependent on coal and miners were forced to increase output by 54 percent in the four years to 2003. Rudimentary safety is ignored and a twelve-hour day, 28 days a month is the industry standard. "There were more than 6,000 deaths last year from explosions, floods, cave-ins and other accidents in China's mining industry, accounting for 80 percent of the world's total fatalities. Independent estimates, however, say up to 20,000 workers are killed every year as they toil underground in poor conditions for little money." (<http://www.chinalaborwatch.org>)

The 'All China Federation of Trade Unions,' is the only legal trade union and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Independent trade unions are banned and workers agitating for better conditions are routinely jailed. But despite the lack of organisation, skill shortages have enabled some to make gains after strikes, as in Shenzhen in October 2004 and Panyu in November 2004.

Knock-on effect

The 'Chinese miracle' has had a detrimental effect on many workers outside China. While the international class who

live by profits has benefited immeasurably by transferring operations to China, many workers in other countries have paid the price with the loss of their jobs. Worst hit have been workers who barely survive in undeveloped countries where imports and exports mirror those of China. The abolition of import quotas on textiles in January 2005, for example, is set to decimate jobs in Bangladesh and Cambodia where companies will be unable to compete. Another casualty has been the Mexican working class where an estimated 225,000 jobs, originally transferred from America after the introduction of the North America Free Trade Association have moved to China since 2001. Likewise, production transferred to South Korean and Taiwanese based corporations is 'out-sourced' to China for labour intensive assembly and then re-export.

But China's capitalism is also influencing the world's working class in other ways. Worker conditions in developed countries are under attack. As *The Economist* euphemistically puts it: "Individual countries can maximise their gains from Chinese integration and minimise their losses by making their own economies more flexible, increasing mobility between sectors and improving education." (2 October 2004, p.12).

Political control

The development of capitalism in China looks set to remain firmly under the political dictatorship of the Communist Party. Although in practical operation for years, free market capitalism was officially reconciled with 'communism' at the 16th National Congress of the CCP in November 2002 when the Party's constitution was amended to open membership to China's 'business elite' to protect the "legitimate rights and interests" of business and property owners. The CCP has become the instrument of multinational corporations and of this 'business elite' and seeks to perpetuate its rule with the support of those who benefit from the system of exploitation in the world's largest sweatshop. The Party has warned it will make no concession to 'democratic aspirations.' At the Central Committee meeting in September 2004, Hu Jintao, China's President and Party leader asserted that "China would never have its own Gorbachev," or countenance erosion of the CCP's ruling position. Denouncing those

who "fly the banner of democracy and political reform," he warned the Party would be "pre-emptive" and "strike when they rear their heads." (Time 31 January 2005, p.45).

In practical terms the political elite is seeking to tighten control over local government to block independent legislatures and plans to "improve the political thinking of university students to elevate the Party's ruling power" (People's Daily, 19 January 2005). Websites exposing corruption have been shut without explanation. Newspapers are banned from publishing anything negative about the



Hu Jintao - no concession to democratic aspirations

police, government or judiciary and journalists have been ordered to stop criticism.

In this way capitalism in China is an investors' paradise and a workers' prison camp. Enormous profits are attained at staggering human cost, and with the growing gap between rich and poor the class struggle is set to intensify. The integration of China into world capitalism has also had profound effects. It has drained away jobs from other parts of the world, lowered global unskilled wage rates and eased pressure on wages in other countries by reducing prices of consumable goods. These world-wide reverberations will

continue. ■
STEVE TROTT



Eleanor Marx, Belfort Bax and "the Woman Question"

Through the pages Justice, the paper of the Social Democratic Federation, Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor and SDF member Belfort Bax hotly debated 'the woman question'

The barrister and writer Ernest Belfort Bax (1854-1925), even though he was a prominent member of the Social Democratic Federation and had even been for a while in the Socialist League with William Morris, was notoriously prejudiced against women, even to the extent of arguing against giving them the vote and of regarding them as being in a privileged position compared with men.

This was a very strange position to be taken up by the co-author with William Morris of *Socialism From the Root Up* or *Socialism Its Growth and Outcome* and of a number of other articles expressing socialist ideas. So strange in fact that his socialist credentials have to be challenged.

One person who did challenge him on the issue was Marx's daughter, Eleanor, then calling herself Eleanor Marx Aveling, adding to her name that of the man she was living with without being married.

Bax had written an article on "The Woman Question" that was published in the SDF's paper *Justice* in its 27 July 1895 issue (see <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1895/07/woman.htm>). This expressed the position he summed up in a later article (30 November) as:

"(. . .) In conclusion I will give, once for all, in a few words my position on this question, cleared of the prejudice imported into it by railing accusations of woman-hating and other objectionable qualities.

1. I utterly dispute the validity of the attempted analogy between women as a sex and the proletariat as a class, on which analogy the plausibility of the "woman movement" for Socialists so largely rests.

2. While fully recognising the

oppression of the capitalist system on women as on men, I deny that, on the whole, it presses more on women than on men, as such.

3. Coming to the question of direct sex-tyranny, if we are to talk of this I am prepared to prove that, at least in all countries where the Anglo-Saxon is dominant, viz., in Britain and its colonies, in the United States, &c., it is invariably men who, both by law and public opinion, are oppressed in the supposed interests of women and not *vice versa*.

4. That the few (mainly formal) disabilities of women in politics or elsewhere which are perpetually being trotted out, are more than compensated for, by special privileges in other directions.

5. That the woman's rights agitation as hitherto conducted, in which the "brute man" plays the role of villain, was born of hysterics and "sour grapes," and is kept

"it is invariably men who are oppressed in the supposed interests of women and not vice versa"

alive by a bare-faced system of "bluff," and both the suppression and perversion of fact, intended to work on the sentimental male with a view of placing women in a safe citadel of privilege and sex-domination - the talk of equality being a mere blind. I am prepared to maintain any or all of these propositions in writing with anyone."

This sparked off a discussion in the paper's correspondence column and led to Eleanor Marx issuing the following challenge to Bax to debate the matter at a public meeting:

"Dear Comrade, - As JUSTICE, "the Organ of the Social Democracy," appears to adopt comrade Bax as the exponent on the *sex (not woman)* question, and as the subject is certainly one worthy consideration and debate, I desire, through your columns, to challenge my friend Bax to a public debate with me on the subject. The debate to take place in some hall in London before the end of the year, so that the proceeds of it (whether from payments for admission or collection on the evening) may be handed over to H. Quelch, hon. Treasurer of the Zurich Committee for the International Trades Union and Socialist Workers' Congress, 1896. The debate to follow the usual lines, 30 minutes on each side, and then two quarters of an hour for each speaker consecutively. Bax, as propounder of the general proposition, to open. Chairman to be mutually agreed upon. - Fraternally yours,

ELEANOR MARX AVELING."
(*Justice*, 16 November 1895)

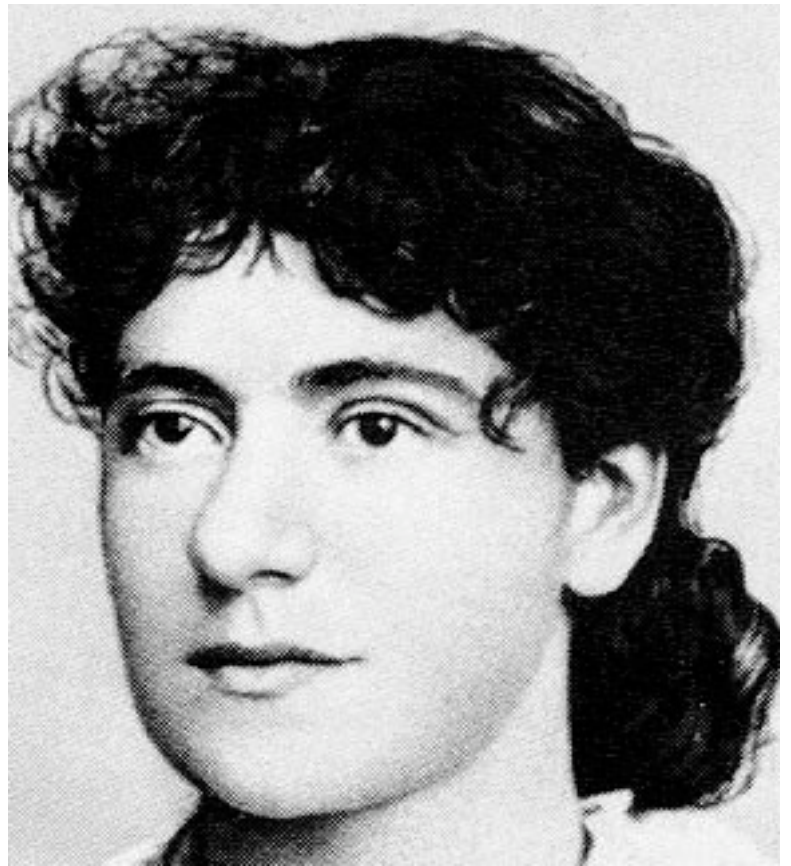
Bax turned down the proposal of a public debate and instead proposed a written exchange, as the following item from the 23 November issue of *Justice* reported:

"Mrs. Aveling sends us the following for publication: -

National Liberal Club,
Whitehall Place, S. W.
Saturday.

Dear Mrs Aveling, - I am perfectly ready to undertake a debate on the woman question in writing with you or any other accredited representative of "Woman's Rights", but I am too little *au fait* with oratorical tricks and platform claptrap to be able to successfully defend the most simple

Far left: Ernest Belfort Bax.
Right: Eleanor Marx
Aveling



and obvious propositions under the conditions proposed even if there were no shrieking crowd against which my voice would find it impossible to contend.

I will enter upon a literary debate on similar lines to that I had with Bradlaugh on Socialism, and shall be pleased to arrange for such a discussion. My weapons in this controversy are fact and argument and not ill-manners and name-calling either direct or indirect. This being so I naturally prefer the written method, when fact and argument are "ausschlaggeben." - Yours sincerely,

E. BELFORT BAX.

To the above the following reply has been sent: -

**Green Street Green,
Orpington,
Nov, 19, 1895.**

Dear Bax, - I am in receipt of your letter (undated). I offered to debate with you on the Sex Question. I am, of course a Socialist, not a representative of "Woman's Rights". It is the Sex Question and its economic basis that I proposed to discuss with you. The so-called "Woman's Rights" question (which appears to be the only one you understand) is a bourgeois idea. I proposed to deal with the Sex Question from the point of view of the working class and the class struggle.

I may remind you that "tricks" and "claptrap" are not confined to the platform. There are, as you know, literary tricks and journalistic claptrap. With a fair and able chairman there would be no shrieking crowd; and you have no more right to assume that those holding the views I should attempt to put forward would "shriek" than I have to assume that your supporters would howl. I remind you that you recently gave an address, followed by an open debate, upon this very subject, at Essex Hall, Strand. I fail to see, therefore, why you do not take up my challenge now. I here repeat it, and will, if you wish it,

debate at Essex Hall. And if you still refuse I shall give a lecture, probably at the Athenaeum Hall, Tottenham Court Road, some Saturday in December, on "Mr Bax and the Sex Question". The proceeds of this lecture will be given to the Zurich Committee Fund for the International Socialist and Trade Union Congress to be held in London in 1896, - Yours faithfully,
ELEANOR MARX AVELING."

Eleanor Marx went ahead with her lecture, with the following notice appearing in *Justice* of 7 December:

The Sex Question
Eleanor Marx Aveling
will lecture on
"Mr. Bax and the Sex Question"
at the

**ATHENAEUM HALL,
73, Tottenham Court Road.**

At 8 P.M., on
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21st, 1895.
Admission 1s, 6d, and 3d.

All proceeds to go to the funds of the
Zurich Committee,
International Socialist Workers and Trade
Union Congress,
London, 1896.

Unfortunately, no report of what she said appeared in *Justice*, so we can only surmise, from the hints in the above letters, that she would have analysed the "Woman's Rights" movement as one of woman property-owners to secure equal rights with men property-owners and argued that women workers were exploited alongside men workers and that both should join together in waging the class struggle that would eventually end in the establishment of socialism which would be "a society in which all the means of production are the property of the community, a society which recognises the full equality of all without

distinction of sex" as she and Aveling quoted from Bebel's *Woman-Past, Present and Future* which they jointly reviewed for the *Westminster Review* in 1886 (see <http://www.marxists.org/archive/eleanor-marx/works/womanq.htm>).

Bax insisted on having the last word, accusing Eleanor Marx of having refused to debate in writing, while in fact it was he who had refused her challenge to a public oral debate (despite being a barrister), and re-iterating his prejudiced views on women:

"Dear Comrade, - Now that the "Woman" controversy in *JUSTICE* is over, and that Mrs. Aveling has prudently shirked my offer to meet her in debate on mutually fair terms, I should be obliged if you will allow me to state that I am still prepared to debate in writing on the basis of the five points laid down by me in my last *JUSTICE* letter on the subject, with any representative advocate of (so-called) "Woman's Rights" (i.e., the further increase of the sex-privileges of women), or with any representative Socialist who is opposed to me in this question . . . (*Justice*, 4 January, 1896).

Bax, incidentally, wrote his letters from the National Liberal Club, an all-male establishment (of course) which included leading members of the Liberal Party, to which the SDF was supposed to be implacably opposed. Henry Hyndman, the SDF's leader, was also a member, an indication of how reformist the top leaders of the SDF had become.

It only remains to add that things ended tragically for Eleanor Marx, who committed suicide in 1898, at the age of 43, after she learned that Aveling had gone off with another woman. ■

Adam Buick

THIS IS WHAT'S WRONG WITH CAPITALISM

It often strikes a socialist that so many of the criticisms of socialism are indeed valid, but only when applied to capitalism. I've heard it said, "socialism may sound fine in theory, but it wouldn't work out in practice." One wonders exactly what is meant by "working out in practice". If it means failure to solve the major social problems, then capitalism has worked wonders in practice, especially, as it creates problems it cannot solve. "But", they explain, "socialism would create chaos." By this, one assumes that war, depression, mass unemployment, destruction of the environment, epidemics of preventable diseases, famine and genocide, are not symptoms of a society in chaos.

Many equate socialism with dictatorship, yet, with the coming of the modern industrial state, most of the world's population has lived under dictatorship.

After World War II, more lived under it than before; but it was fought, "to make the world safe for democracy." Even today, after the fall of the east European dictatorships, many countries have some form of repressive government.

We are told that individual freedom will suffer in a socialist society; yet how splendid it is to be free under capitalism. Free to be unemployed, free to starve (which a lot of the world's population are doing.) Free to breathe polluted air.

"But socialism will bring regimentation and uniformity," our critics say. I often look at rows and rows of stereotyped apartment buildings and notice the lack of uniformity. I'm sure many workers

who have to punch in and out, work on conveyor belts and fill in time sheets, would never dream of calling life regimented under capitalism.

"But socialism will create corruption and sheer callousness". Isn't capitalism such a highly moral society? One need only observe how many civic dignitaries, corporations and individual capitalists have been unable or unwilling to obey their own phoney laws which they hand down to us (to keep us in line), with all the self-righteousness of a God On High.

"In a socialist society with no financial inducements to work, lots of people will be lazy." What, however, is laziness except lack of inspiration? Certainly there are many lazy folk around today. How many capitalists work "too" hard?

"But," they tell us, "socialism will stifle individual creativity and initiative." No economic system can prevent human ingenuity expressing itself. Where the confusion stems from is that it is not clearly understood that the economic character this takes is determined by the system one lives under. Though no economic system can prevent human creativity, capitalism has, to an extent, stifled it. In the cut-throat world of competition many fail. Many

have been unable to raise the capital to even start and, many who have been successful, have later gone bankrupt. It's no wonder so many feel insecure. It would be a wonder if they didn't.

In a socialist society where the tools of production will be used, first and foremost, to provide all with the necessities of life and where all stand equal in relation to

them, there will be nothing to prevent full rein being given to human creativity. All will be free to develop their personalities and various abilities to the fullest possible facet, and all will contribute according to their various skills and abilities. The premise of production will be based on serving humankind and from this, people will get a satisfaction unknown under capitalism.

It will reach a point where, as Oscar Wilde said, "A man will be known for what he is, not for what he has." ■

STEVE SHANNON



Cooking the Books (2)

Is Brown's luck running out?

When Gordon Brown boasted at last year's Labour Party conference

that "no longer the country of mass unemployment, Britain is now advancing further and faster to full employment than at any times in our lives" he must have realised that he was giving a hostage to fortune. Or perhaps, since he also claimed that "no longer the stop-go economy, Britain is now enjoying the longest period of sustained economic growth for 200 years", he had deluded himself that, as the thus self-proclaimed best Chancellor of the Exchequer since 1805, he really was able to control the levels of production, prices and unemployment in Britain.

Whatever the reason, last month's business headlines must have begun to shake his confidence in his infallibility. "Inflation at its highest point for 7 years", reported the Times (13 July) and, the next day, "Question

mark over UK growth as jobless claims rise".

Reporting on this Gabriel Rozenberg, the Times' Economics Reporter, wrote: "Fears that the slowing economy is triggering a sustained rise in unemployment have intensified after the number of people claiming jobless benefits rose for a fifth month in a row . . . The last time the count rose for five consecutive months was in 1992 . . . The Government's preferred survey-based measure of unemployment fell by 4,000 in the three months to May, the Office for National Statistics said. But analysts said that at 1,426,000, the measure was still 43,000 higher than in August last year. Employment fell by 72,000 in the same period, the biggest drop since 1993".

What amounts to "mass" unemployment can be a matter of opinion, but 1,426,000 unemployed (plus many more on incapacity benefit or paid to do nothing on various "job creation" schemes) would have been regarded as such in the 50s, 60s and 70s.

Another indication that Gordon Brown's luck at having been Chancellor during an unusually long period of recovery may be beginning to run out was the headline a couple of days previously "Manufacturers bear the cost of surging oil prices":

"Surging oil prices have forced up

manufacturers' costs by the fastest rate for 20 years, tightening margins, official figures showed yesterday". This led, reported Gabriel Rozenberg (Times, 12 July), to input prices going up by 2.3 percent between May and June. "The rise meant that manufacturers' costs for goods have risen 12.1 percent in the year to June, the largest annual rise since March 1985, but weak consumer demand has made it difficult to raise prices". Output prices actually fell 0.2 percent in June. As one analyst put it, this was "good news for high street goods inflation, but not for profits".

Since capitalism runs on profits and responds to changes in the rate of profit (rather than to consumer demand, as the popular defence of capitalism claims), this could be a serious development. Anything more than a merely passing fall in profit margins is bound to translate itself sooner or later in falling production, rising unemployment and falling consumer demand. When this happens, Brown will discover that governments don't, and can't, control the way capitalism works and that he hadn't discovered a magic formula for preventing the boom-slump cycle and engineering sustained growth.

A Rare Bird

Helen Macfarlane. A Feminist, Revolutionary Journalist, and Philosopher in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England. By David Black, Lexington Books, 2004. £15.



Helen Macfarlane was radicalised in Austria by the revolutions of 1848 which swept through Europe. On her return to Britain she took up revolutionary journalism under the pseudonym Howard

Morton for the Chartist George Julian Harney. It was in Harney's weekly newspaper *Red Republican* in 1850 that Macfarlane produced the first English translation of what became known as the *Communist Manifesto*. In the German original it was called *Manifesto of the Communist Party* but in the *Red Republican* its title was *German Communism: Manifesto of the German Communist Party*. Black is critical of this name change because the insertion of the word "German" into the title twice over "de-emphasises its internationalist thrust." But this misses the point of the change, a reason the *Red Republican* seems to have understood but which is now widely misunderstood. That is, while the theoretical parts of the Manifesto have universal application the practical proposals (particularly at the end of Section 2) were put forward with Germany in mind at that time. That is why Marx and Engels later said that some parts of the Manifesto, particularly in Section 2, were obsolete (see the Preface to the German edition of 1872).

In the *Red Republican* version of the Manifesto, some parts are missing and others changed mainly to suit its English readership. In the 1888 English translation, supervised by Engels, the famous opening line begins: "A spectre is haunting Europe. The spectre of Communism." But in Macfarlane's translation this becomes: "A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe. We are haunted by a ghost. The ghost of Communism." Black states that her use of "hobgoblin" rather than "spectre" is unfortunate, but it is possible that her English readers at that time more readily understood the hobgoblin metaphor.

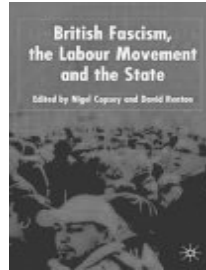
Marx called Macfarlane "a rare bird" - "the only collaborator on his [Harney's] spouting rag who had original ideas." She was the first person to translate and explain in English the work of the German philosopher Hegel. She wrote a few other articles for the *Red Republican* in the 1850s but almost nothing is known of her in the years before or after. What seems certain however is that Macfarlane could be described as the first British Marxist, a generation before that term came into use.

LEW

Fascism in Britain

Martin Pugh: Hurrah for the Blackshirts! Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars. Jonathan Cape. £20.00.

Nigel Copsey and David Renton, eds: British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State. Palgrave Macmillan. £50.00.



These two books are not recommended for the various views expressed by the authors and contributors, but for the wealth of information, much of it new, on British Fascism.

The first fascisti, under the leadership of Benito Mussolini, was founded in Italy in 1914; Britain's first Fascist organisation emerged in May, 1925, six months after Mussolini's coup. It, too called itself Fascisti, but the following year changed its name to the British Fascists. Most of its leaders were aristocrats or men from military or naval backgrounds. They were militantly anti-Jewish and, through endorsement by such newspapers as the *Times*, *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail*, believed in a worldwide Jewish conspiracy as portrayed by the infamous forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. The British fascists soon, however, split into even more extreme sects such as the National Fascisti and Arnold Leese's Imperial Fascist League.

Martin Pugh demonstrates in considerable detail the close connections between the Fascist groups and parties and rightwing, and even "mainstream", conservative politicians. The Fascists were often looked upon as more decisive Tories who wanted a more powerful, corporate state which would, hopefully, keep the "lower orders" in control and stop "alien" immigration. Many members of the Conservative Party would also be members of one of the fascist groups at the same time. Both could be depended upon to defend the Nation and the Empire. Indeed, between the two world wars, not a few members of the Royal family, including the then Prince of Wales, were sympathetic to Mussolini's Fascism and later Nazi Germany. Winston Churchill expressed admiration for Mussolini, and the Prince of Wales had Nazi friends.

Of course the Fascists opposed the General Strike of 1926. In fact, as Pugh notes, they were particularly enthusiastic anti-strike volunteers, enrolling in the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, and as Special Constables. Chief constables welcomed the Fascists, but only as individuals and not as uniformed members of Fascist parties as these had hoped.

In 1920, the Conservative Member of Parliament, Oswald Mosley, crossed the floor to sit as an independent; in 1924, he joined the Labour Party. His views were already interventionist, corporatist, almost

Fascist, but he was enthusiastically welcomed into the Labour Party. By 1929, Mosley was appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but he soon resigned, and in February 1931 he launched his New Party. Then in 1932, after visiting Rome, he founded the British Union of Fascists. The BUF adopted the Corporate State, with the abolition of political parties, as its official policy. At this stage, Mosley and the BUF looked to Italy for their model, and it was not until 1936 that the BUF became pro-Nazi. Pugh notes that Mosley regularly visited Mussolini for several years. Mosley did not meet Hitler until 1935. During this period, the British Union of Fascists, which added the phrase "and National Socialists" to its title, became increasingly anti-Jewish. The BUF was organised militarily, complete with uniforms until these were banned in 1936. For a number of years, the *Daily Mail*, owned by Lord Northcliffe, supported the BUF and promoted Fascism.

Besides the BUF, there were still a number of small Fascist parties, as well as various "front" groups such as the January Club and Anglo-German Fellowship and, later, the Link. As in the 1920s, such groups had many Tories, rightwing and mainstream, as members. Indeed, most Conservatives, in Parliament and the country at large, were either pro-Fascist Italy, pro-Nazi Germany or, like Neville Chamberlain, appeasers, as Martin Pugh demonstrates in some detail. Many of them continued to hold similar ideas even after Britain had declared war on Germany, on 3 September, 1939. In 1940, Oswald Mosley, as well as about 800 Fascists and others considered to be pro-German, were arrested and imprisoned. But by 1942, most had been released. Mosley was conditionally released from prison in 1944. The BUF had been banned in June, 1940.

British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State is a collection of fairly short and diverse essays by various authors. Richard Maguire discusses the use of Fascists by the Conservative Government in defence of what Stanley Baldwin called the "community" in defeating the miners, and during the General Strike of 1926. And, as noted in Pugh's book, the authorities were more than prepared to use Fascists as strike-breakers, their views being that the Fascists could be depended upon as Special Constables and the like.

Richard Thurlow outlines the formation of the Security Service (MI5), and its collaboration with Special Branch in surveillance of the Communist Party, and Comintern agents in Britain, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s. After about 1933, MI5 and Special Branch began to interest themselves in the British Union of Fascists, which hitherto they had not done. Interestingly, Thurlow points out that Maxwell Knight of MI5 had himself been the British Union of Fascists' Director of Intelligence in 1927. Graham Macklin discusses the attitude of the police and magistrates towards the Fascists in their confrontations with the Communists, and shows that in general they were more sympathetic towards the Fascists than the Communists. Not surprisingly, Oswald Mosley was particularly effusive in his support for the police, many of whom were anti-Jewish. Philip Coupland outlines what he calls "left-wing fascism", in which the BUF use leftwing terminology to attract

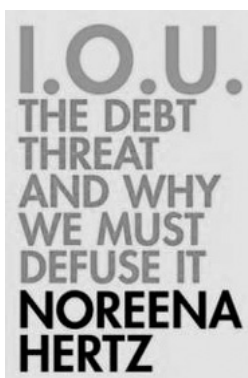
workers and disillusioned Labourites and Communists. In parts of the country this was quite successful.

David Renton discusses the so-called anti-Fascism, during the 1974-79 period, by such organisations as the Anti-Nazi League, the Trade Unions and the SWP, all of which from a socialist viewpoint achieved nothing in defeating fascist ideas and activities. Indeed, a party like the BNP today probably has as much support as did the BUF in 1935. Possibly more.

PEN

Borrowers and Lenders

Noreena Hertz: I.O.U.: The Debt Threat and Why We Must Defuse It. Harper Perennial £7.99.



Hertz is fairly well-known as a commentator on and critic of globalisation. But unlike some, she does not even make the pretence of being anti-capitalist. In her previous book *The Silent Takeover*, she made it clear that she was advocating another

form of capitalism in contrast to a laissez-faire version that sidelined justice and democracy.

The book under review focusses on developing-country debt and its consequences, not just for the Third World but for 'advanced' capitalist countries too. For debt and possible defaults can lead to desperation and terrorism, environmental damage and general economic recession. During the 'Cold War', loans were often made for strategic reasons, to keep countries friendly, whether US loans to Latin America or Russian and Chinese lending to Africa. The collapse of Eastern European state capitalism brought a sudden end to this, with loans being called in and new lending being on much less favourable terms. Hertz gives a good account of many of the mechanisms by which lending occurs, such as the roles of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Many Western countries have export credit agencies that underwrite sales by domestic companies and step in to pay them if anything goes wrong (so much for the risks of entrepreneurship). There are even traders who buy and sell developing-country debt as if it were pork or oil, usually making vast profits in the process.

In 2004, the world's poorest countries owed \$458 billion. The consequences of this seem pretty devastating:

"Millions of children continue to die every single year because money that could be spent on preserving their health is still being spent on debt service. Millions of children are prevented from attending school because money that could be spent on their education is still being spent on repaying debt."

Hence the demand to 'Drop the Debt!', and Hertz's proposals for deciding when debt is illegitimate and should be cancelled, plus

her suggestions of 'new principles for borrowers and lenders'.

The problem is that all such proposals effectively accept the status quo, i.e. global capitalism. They do not even begin to address the question of why people are poor in the first place. The passage quoted above assumes that money spent on repaying debts would otherwise be used for health care and education, but there is no guarantee of this at all: governments in developing countries, like all governments, run affairs in the interests of the ruling class. In a world rooted in ownership of resources by a tiny minority of the population, poverty, famine, and lack of access to decent health care and education are inevitable. Cancelling debt (which is anyway less costly to the lenders than might at first appear) relates to just one aspect of the way in which the basic inequality of capitalism reveals itself. It does not affect underlying causes - which is why, whatever the sincerity of those who support it, it will make no contribution to ending poverty.

PB

Leninised and Lionised

Marx And Other Four-Letter Words. Edited by Georgina Blakeley and Valerie Bryson, Pluto Press, 2005.



The authors and one of their previous collaborations

Being a collection of essays by academics for their students, this volume examines Marx's key concepts: capitalism, class, the

state, oppression, revolution, equality and democracy, and more. There are numerous books of this type and most of the chapters do a reasonable job of reconstructing Marx's thought. However, Paul Blackledge's chapter on Revolution treats Marx and Lenin as though they were complementary. This is the standard Leninist line put forward by Blackledge:

"While Marx and Engels laid down some general guidelines for building a workers' party, they did not develop these into a fully worked out theory: this task was taken up by later Marxists, notably Lenin ..."

Paraphrasing Lenin himself, the author claims that Lenin's *State and Revolution* (published in 1917) "returned to the works of Marx and Engels" and explained their ideas on revolution. But this untrue. Marx and Engels' insistence on working class self-emancipation specifically rules out what would become later known as Leninism, the idea that the working class were incapable of self-emancipation and must be freed by a Leninist vanguard party. This is in fact the exact opposite of Marx and Engels' position.

As the chapter on Working-Class Internationalism quotes Marx: "numbers weigh only in the balance if united by combination and led by knowledge." And the chapter on Democracy, quoting another commentator on Marx in the twentieth century, declares: "the terrible fate which befell Marx was that he was Leninised."

LEW

Wronging the Rights

The Ruling Asses. By Stephen Robins. Prion Books. ISBN 1-85375-572-9. £6.99.

The Ruling Asses will certainly make you laugh but, on the other hand, the thoughtful reader might be disturbed by the identity of the people who have provided the utterly absurd quotations that make up the book's 216 pages.

The clue is in the sub-title: "A little book of political stupidity" and the people who have unconsciously provided the stupidities are prominent politicians; the very 'they' in that ubiquitous opinion that 'they will [have to] do something about it.'

Beneath the amusing picture on the front page is a quote from the redoubtable Mr John Prescott, The Minister for Transport and current Labour Deputy Prime Minister. 'I want to wrong that right', says Mr Prescott. The book's editor, Stephen Robins, in giving Prescott pride of place, so to speak, sees the obvious humour in this particular piece of asininity but, on the other hand it could be a serious comment on the vicious authoritarianism of the present Labour government.

There can be no doubt about the mental state of the man whose absolute pearls of frightening ignorance wins him top spot in this collection: George W Bush, the President of the most powerful nation on Earth and the man with control of the nuclear button. George's father, we learn from his generous representation in this collection of absurdities, was the equal of his son in the mouthing of verbal inanities. This reduces the present great man to a sort of second generation idiot and perhaps poses the question as to why the American establishment, which boasts a 'smart' bomb, should afflict itself with such stupid presidents.

The collection is well indexed and the fact that the index contains 8 pages of names at 2 columns to the page means that your favourite politician is likely to be included - though, in fairness to the unique stupidities of the Bushes, father and son, it should be pointed out that they share some 124 listings in a work where, for example, the home-based political nutter, Ian Paisley, can only achieve 7.

This is a very funny book and an easy read but it frighteningly exposes the cash nexus in what passes for democracy in capitalist society where the means of winning elections is a commodity.

RM

Film Review

The Edukators. The Warwick Cinema, Carlisle

Co-written and directed by Hans Weingarten, the eponymous heroes of this film are two young men - radicals, we might perhaps call them - who seem to have fused feng shui with Situationism to create a stylish and esoteric new form of political protest. Their method is to break into the homes of the rich but, rather than steal, they move the furniture into new spaces, or rearrange it into new forms, to create a visual spectacle designed to shock the occupants out of their cash-

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encrusted apathy. Like high-class cat burglars, they leave prominent calling cards stating 'the days of plenty are numbered' or 'you have too much money,' and later read of their exploits in the newspapers.



Played by Daniel Brühl (Jan) and Stipe Erceg (Peter), it starts to go wrong for the Edukators when, unknown to Peter, his girlfriend, Jule, and Jan become an item (never let a woman spoil a good relationship, the film seems to imply). Witness to police brutality, bullied by her manager, bullied by her landlord, and crippled by debt, Jule has been sufficiently radicalised by these experiences to align herself with Peter and Jan and become the unofficial third Edukator.

The kind of Spectaclesque rich-bashing they engage in may leave some of their older victims remembering that there's a beach beneath their gravel driveway. Indeed, after the Edukators have been forced to abduct one of their victims they learn that he was once a radical who rubbed shoulders with the prominent Lefties in the glory days of '68. Now a rich entrepreneur, the Edukators - and the audience - are moved to wonder if his revolutionary ideals are now dead, or just dormant. During his captivity he befriends Jan, Jule and Peter, cooking for them, washing their clothes, sharing their

drugs, and it seems that the accumulated detritus of thirty years in the business world begins to fall away to reveal, to some extent, the idealist he once was, or at least a more benign capitalist, a Scrooge on Christmas morning. The Edukators suspect his motives and are alarmed by their developing friendship with their class enemy and 'hostage'. His abduction by the Edukators becomes his education, and he parts company with his captors on friendly terms, letting bygones be bygones and, more importantly, promising not to contact the authorities. But some leopards never change their spots...

To some extent the film is reminding us of the generally perceived view that youthfulness and radicalism seem to go hand in hand, whilst 'ageing' and 'conservative' are words which frequently keep each other company. There are many people who claim to have been socialists back in the sixties, yet after a few pints confess that Enoch was right. And some know, and some even perhaps are, former radicals who now vote New Labour and watch the world go by from behind the Financial Times.

As *The Edukators* should have tried to explore more often, there are probably many reasons why youthful would-be smashers of the state mature into upholders of the status quo. It is often the case that self-styled radicals were never radical in the first place, and a promising career is a great incentive for abandoning one's revolutionary ideals. But as Socialist Party members will evince, radicalism never dies: it simply loses its dress sense.

Neil Windle

Fifty Years Ago

LABOUR PARTY PROGRAMME FOR THE YEAR 2000

The idea of encouraging the donkey forward by dangling a carrot a short distance in front of his nose is an ancient one but even the oldest tricks can be changed and Mr. Albu, Labour M.P. for Edmonton, has discovered a startling variation.

Like other Labour M.P.s he has had to realise that the Labour electoral carrot offered to the voters in the recent General Election was not successful in enticing them to the polling booth for 1,500,000 of former Labour voters this time refused to go in and put their cross. So Mr. Albu, who is a member of the Executive Committee of the Fabian Society, has been thinking up a new programme for Labour. He spoke about it at a meeting of the Central London Fabian Society on June 29. He said:-

"There should be adequate incentives, but property ownership should be reduced by estate duties and a capital gains tax so that by the year 2000 the distribution of inherited wealth would be similar to that of taxed income today." (*Manchester Guardian*, 30 June, '55)

Mr. Albu is not proposing that inequality of accumulated wealth be eliminated but only that it should be lessened, so that it would not exceed the smaller, but still very great, difference between the annual income of the rich man and the wages of the poor. So we progress! Many years ago the Fabian Society, and later the Labour Party, planned to do something "immediately" about this inequality. Now Mr. Albu suggests postponing the completion of half a plan until a date 45 years ahead, by which time most of the present generation will be dead.

From *The Socialist Standard*, August 1955



cause widespread damage to the lives of people who happen to live in their flood plains.

Presently some African countries are troubled by, among other things, wars, corrupt government as well as crop failure due to drought and other factors. To some extent many other parts of the world have also been affected in similar ways over the last few centuries. The 'debt' that is owed by many countries in Africa and elsewhere is often at least in part due to the efforts of other countries to trade with them. With things ordered as they presently are - in other words governed by money - there is no incentive for traders with Africa or anywhere else to be 'fair'. These traders are bound by the same rules all traders in the present system are - i.e. to maximise their profit in trading with anyone. If they were 'fair' they would quickly go out of business because their profits would decline.

Therefore 'wiping out' present debts is no guarantee of a long term solution to the poverty that has been more or less imposed on many African countries. Rather the abandoning of the money system itself by the entire world

and sharing the resources of the earth in common is the only real way. Perhaps those countries that have experience in combating the worst effects of droughts could be called upon to help. There are many examples of international co-operation at present under the money system, Space Exploration to name one large one. Another example near to my home is the construction of the Thames Barrier, which utilised the expertise of the Dutch in Flood Defences, the Americans in producing heavy duty waterproof bearings for the gates, the British with their expertise in large scale steel structures, and Austrians with other necessary skills. If this can all be done now, with money as a limiting factor - imagine what could be done when the entire world is united in the will to solve the problems any other area may suffer! We could all share the skills and resources we all have in plenty for the benefit of all humanity! Imagine what kind of world that could be!

Yours,
Tony Norwell, London SE2

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Meetings

Swansea

Monday 8 August, 7.30pm

POST-WAR LABOUR GOVERNMENT 1945-51: HOPE AND BETRAYAL

Speaker: Steve Trott

Unitarian Church, High St, Swansea

Chiswick

Tuesday 16 August, 8pm

THE COMMODIFICATION OF CULTURE

Speaker: Adam Buick

Committee Room, Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Road), W.4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

Norwich

Saturday 20 August, 12 noon

Welcome and informal chat for new visitors

1pm: Meal

2pm: **Question(s)/discussion on theory**

3-4pm: **Question(s)/discussion on practice**

The Conservatory, back room of The Rosary Tavern, Rosary Road, Norwich

Central London

Bank Holiday Monday, 29 August, 8pm

THE CASE FOR SOCIALISM

Speaker: John Bissett

Upstairs Room, Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place (near Marble Arch), W1 (nearest tube: Marble Arch).

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

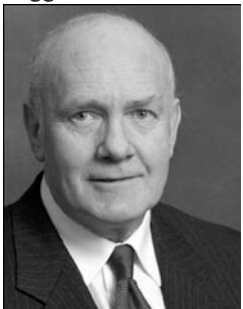
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



The Outsider

The bookies would not have been overjoyed at the result of the election, seeing as the favourite came in with a clear lead over the rest of the field. The likes of William Hill had hardly had time to tot up their losses after Labour's "historic" (as they keep reminding us) third successive victory than they had to get on with calculating the odds for the leadership contests of both the big parties. In the case of the Tories the outlook for the bookies is not so gloomy because there is likely to be quite a large field of runners, even if Territorial Army ex-SAS hero David Davis will probably be a narrow favourite. But the race for the Labour leadership promises to be more menacing, with Gordon Brown another odds-on favourite who will cost the bookies some money if he finally, after all those years of manoeuvring, in-fighting and hostile briefing, gets to stand smiling on the doorstep at Number Ten.

Except that, as Brown himself - and the bookies - know all too well, it is not that simple. In organisations like the Labour Party there are very, very few MPs who do not regard themselves as likely candidates for the leadership. To illustrate this point: when Tony Blair announced he would eventually hand over the reins the Guardian columnist Simon Hoggart played a cruel joke to expose the vanity lurking in the unlikely of breasts. He asked a low-ranking Labour minister, who does not have a shred of realistic hope of becoming his party's leader, whether he should consider making himself available for nomination. At first the minister demurred but a little more flattery from Hoggart awakened his atrophied



ambitions. He murmured that now he came to think of it he had recently been approached by quite a few MPs. Hoggart did not tell us what has happened to that hapless man in the reshuffle.

Reid

He may have found some consolation in history. When Anthony Eden resigned the Tory leadership in 1957 the front runner to take over was R A Butler and little

attention was given to the chances of Harold Macmillan. But in the event all the energy Macmillan had expended over the years in seeing off his rivals brought him success. When Macmillan in his turn resigned in 1964 Butler was again a favourite for the succession, with Hailsham not so well fancied. But Alec Douglas-Home came from the back of the field to take the job. The Labour Party in the 1930s was led by George Lansbury, who at the party conference in 1935 won a standing ovation for his speech in a debate on the sanctions against Italy for the attack on Ethiopia. Lansbury's speech was flavoured by phrases like "I am ready to stand as early christians did and say 'This is our faith'" but he was emphatically defeated in the vote, which left him little choice but to resign. The main contenders for the job - the favourites - were Herbert Morrison and Arthur Greenwood but they were beaten by Clement Attlee who, as the outsider, was rated as mousy and colourless but who turned out to be nothing like that when it came to doing the job of Prime Minister.

So who are the outside chances now, in the contest to replace Blair? Prominent among them is Dr. John Reid, MP for Airdrie and Shotts where, as the saying goes, they weigh the Labour votes rather than count them. What is Reid's form as a

"he loves taking the salute at military march pasts"

leadership contender? By the standards of the Labour Party, it is pretty strong. In 1973 he joined the Communist Party and later CND but then went over to the Labour Party and a job as one of their research officers, followed by a stint as political adviser to Neil Kinnock - which, in view of Kinnock's well-earned reputation for political blunders and electoral disasters, Reid would do well to gloss over. He got into Parliament in 1987, for Motherwell North which, through various changes of name, has been held by him ever since with never less than 61 per cent of the vote. His resignation from CND provoked approval from Julian Lewis, the famously combative right-wing Tory MP for New Forest East, who wrote to the Sunday Express in August 1999:

"It is true that Dr. Reid was previously a nuclear disarmer, but it is also true that he was one of the first to recognise his mistake, and genuinely campaign for a sensible nuclear deterrent policy."

"As a former professional anti-CND campaigner, I am ready enough to criticise unsuitable Labour appointees, but Dr. Reid does not fall into that category: he would be as good a Defence Secretary as any Labour government could provide."

There is no record of whether Reid was embarrassed by back-slapping from such a quarter but he has developed a skin tough enough to survive in the notoriously

ruthless relationships among the warring comrades of the Scottish Labour Party, where a popular slogan is "a long memory is much better than a good memory". This was the setting for Reid's burning antipathy towards Gordon Brown, dating from the early 1990s when Brown was chairman of Scottish Labour. It is that passion which is likely to drive him to oppose Brown in a leadership contest, winning votes as the "stop Brown" candidate.

Defence

When Labour won the 1997 election Reid's talents (if that is the right word) were recognised in his appointment to a succession of high profile ministerial jobs until, in the reshuffle in May, he was placed as Defence Secretary. It was rumoured that he coveted Jack Straw's job as Foreign Secretary but perhaps his notorious difficulty with the silkily diplomatic touch counted against him; or perhaps Straw sulked and simply refused to go. Another rumour had it that Defence is the job he always prized since it fitted his bellicose personality and anyway, in spite of his much-trumpeted humble origins, he loves taking the salute at military march pasts. A probable reason for his multiplicity of government jobs is that he is what is known as "a safe pair of hands", which is a diplomat's way of saying that he can be relied on unblinkingly to justify - in Parliament, the press, on TV - whatever the Blair government does, no matter how indefensible it is. His voting record is tediously obedient, including on cuts in funding benefits for lone parents and students, on means-tested Incapacity Benefit, on air strikes against Afghanistan and on the war against Iraq. That is how he earned a reputation as "Reid the Rottweiler" and "Teflon John". Attentive fans of Jeremy Paxman will know that the TV interrogator weighed in by describing Reid as Blair's "attack dog", to which Reid responded, as would be expected from one of Her Majesty's Secretaries of State, Privy Counsellor and trusted lieutenant of the Prime Minister, by calling Paxman "a West London wanker".

Reid has consistently shown a readiness to reshape what he still, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, calls his principles in order to solidify his standing in the Labour Party. Of course he may change; there have been countless examples of leaders who have won power on one set of promises and have then outraged their supporters by performing a dramatic u-turn. We know that with Reid anything is possible; there are practically no bounds to what he will say or do, within the confines of support for the capitalist system and its government. Without that ability he would not survive in the hurly-burly of politics. Anyone looking for a promising outsider for the Labour leadership race could do worse than lay a shrewd bet on the Rottweiler - soon, while the odds on him are so attractive. ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back

GROWING OLD DISGRACEFULLY

A feature often commented upon by historians, is that before private property societies existed the elderly of a kin, clan or tribal group were treated with great respect. Their knowledge of the terrain, animals and availability of food was invaluable to their society. How different today in modern capitalism. "The government is abandoning hundreds of thousands of elderly people to a care system that steals their dignity, denies them meaningful choice and risks endangering their health, according to a hard-hitting report out tomorrow. The report - by the country's leading independent healthcare thinktank, the King's Fund - concludes that funding and organisational problems are putting old people at a disadvantage compared with other recipients of care. It also says that untrained, unqualified and overstretched staff are putting them at risk." The *Observer* (26 June) Let's face it inside capitalism old-age sucks. Although all those social workers forced to make these decisions will themselves be old one day.



MORAL CONSIDERATIONS

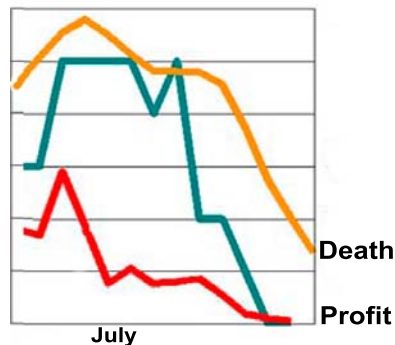
The growing practice of scientific journals to copyright and restrict access to scientific data without cash subscriptions has led Robert Smith, a former editor of the *British Medical Journal*, to raise a moral dilemma. "Making money out of restricting access to (medical) research is immoral." The *Times* (2 July) In fact Mr Smith you are terribly wrong, inside capitalism it is not only moral but good business practice. Only inside a socialist society will we have unrestricted access to knowledge for every human being on earth. People dying because medical personnel couldn't access the latest scientific knowledge would be unthinkable inside a socialist society. It is quite moral today.

THE GRAPES OF WRATH

In any sane society an abundant harvest from the vineyards would be the cause of celebration and no doubt a little celebratory tippie. But we don't live in a sane society, we live in capitalism where the whole purpose of production is to make a profit not satisfy a social need. "It may seem heinous to any enthusiastic bordeaux drinker, but the EU has pledged £100m under the common agricultural policy to turn 670m bottles of French and Spanish wine into industrial alcohol to help reduce a surplus caused by competition from the New World." The *Sunday Times* (3 July) Inside a socialist society if we produce too much wine we'll just have to drink it. Terrible prospect, aint it?

AN INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

The callousness of capitalism and the cynicism of the capitalist press could hardly be summed up better than this report about the bomb carnage in London that left over 50 dead and scores wounded. "City Index, the financial



spreadbetting firm, said that more than 8,000 retail investors had dived into the market on Thursday, correctly backing their hunch that share prices would quickly bounce back. Some will find profiting from horror distasteful. But many in the City applaud the resilience of capitalism." The *Sunday Times* (10 July) The editors carried this story under the headline - "Investors made millions amid bombs chaos." Could anything be more disgusting? We are talking about trauma, amputation, disfigurement and death here not an investment opportunity.

DARE TO THINK

"A penniless asylum seeker in London was vilified across two pages of the *Daily Mail* last week. No surprise there, perhaps - except that the villain in question has been dead since 1883. "Marx the Monster" was the Mail's furious reaction to the news that thousands of Radio 4 listeners had chosen Karl Marx as their favourite thinker." The *Observer* (17 July) Many people who read the works of Karl Marx realise that the popular concept that he has anything to do with Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin or Mao is nonsense, in fact that he was opposed to dictatorship and authority all his life. Start reading what Marx actually wrote and accept his challenge to think for yourself and bugger the *Daily Mail*.

Free lunch

by Rigg



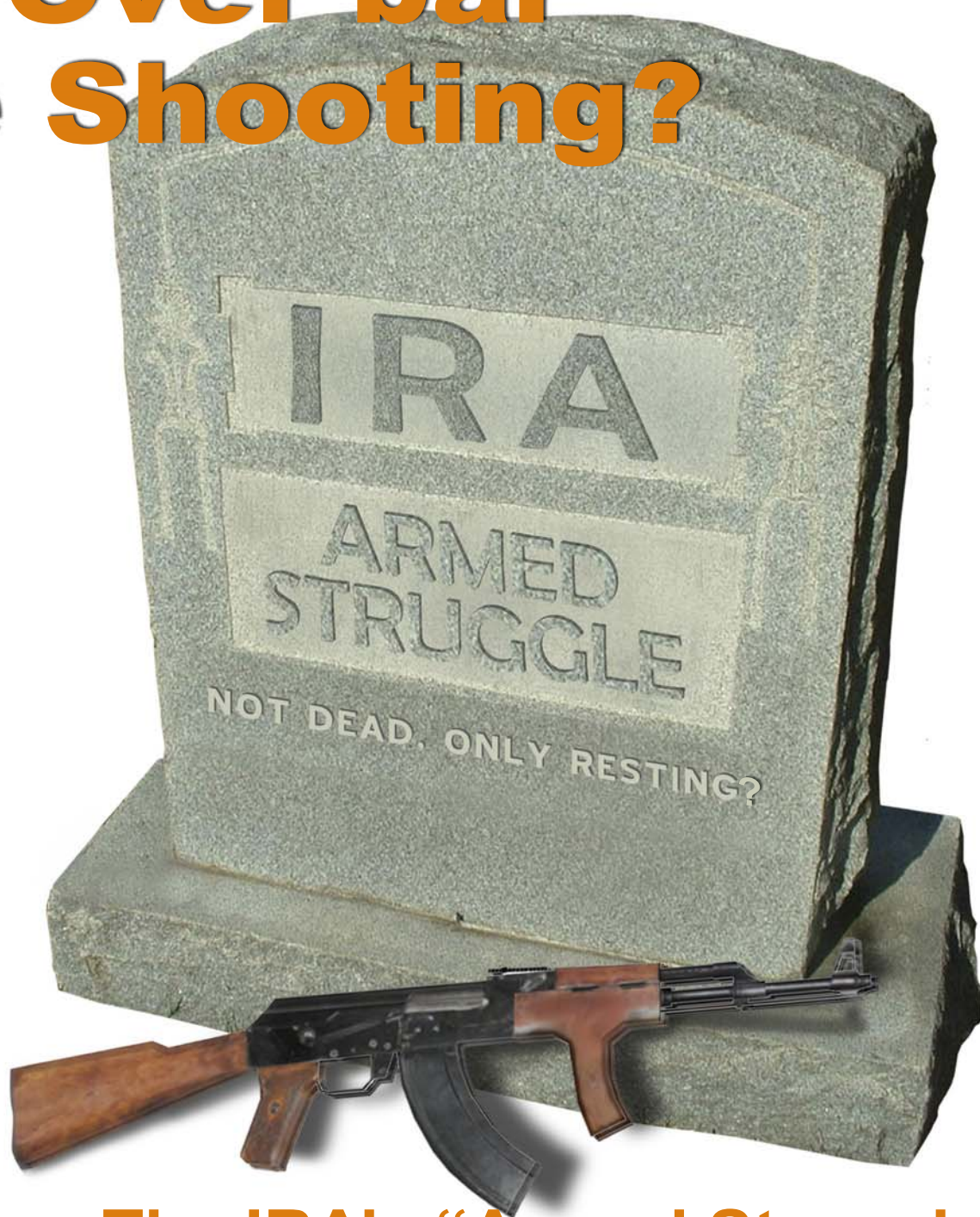
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All Over bar the Shooting?



The IRA's "Armed Struggle"



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Marx: Radio 4's favourite philosopher page 14

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"It is always the working class that make up the pawns in armies, legal and illegal, and the end of a war never brings them victory"

IRA: Is it Really the End of the "Armed Struggle"?, page 6

Religion and Terrorism

Socialists are always cautious about the term 'morality' because within class society it largely pertains to what the ruling class have established as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour or actions or activities which are regarded as 'good' or 'bad'.

Nevertheless it is easy for Socialists to empathise with the feeling of popular revulsion that followed the acts of mass murder in London on 7 July. As always when guns and bombs are used as political weapons, the victims of the bombings in London were innocent and without any influence over the agenda that motivated the murderers; they were simply people going to work.

The general feeling, from the government, the Queen, the churches, the media and the public at large is that it was an outrage; that slaughtering innocent people simply because you oppose the actions of those you perceive to be their leaders is a barbaric act that cannot be justified by the idealism, ideology or political or religious beliefs of those ordering or carrying out such an act.

To raise the question of the war in Iraq is in no way to imply sympathy with the terrorists but it is reasonable to look at Iraq and, indeed, the entire panoply of violence, armaments and warfare that latter-day capitalism generates.

The British Labour government largely in obedience to the dictates of the political kings of US capitalism - just like

those who ordered what is agreed were barbaric acts in London - did co-operate in the massive slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis who, rather than supporting Saddam Hussein were, according to the Anglo-American coalition, the real victims of the dreaded dictator. The result of both actions, though not the numbers of victims, was identical: innocent people who were wholly bereft of any power or influence to concede to the demands of those ordering the killings were wantonly slaughtered.

All forms of warfare - and terrorism is a form of warfare - present the threat of death to the participants whether they are professionals (people prepared to kill in circumstances determined by their employers) or serious amateurs (people prepared to kill for a specific cause). In either circumstance risk to life comes easier to those who believe that life on Earth is a mere prelude to a life hereafter. It is a notion that gives solace to believers; making them less anxious to question their role in a situation that defeats rational understanding. That is why governments promote irrational religious belief for their armed forces and why they provide facilities for religious rituals, make priests and parsons officers and pay their salaries.

For the terrorist the most pressing incentive is belief in the virtue of their cause. The man or woman facing the dreadful hazards associated with terrorism has to be morally reinforced with the idea

that their god is on their side. God as Allah, as the Great Jehovah, or whatever other identity he takes on in any of the myriad of religious beliefs, is always stern and demanding and his strictures are always accommodating to the belligerence engendered by the exclusivity of faith. God is indeed a vital weapon in the psychological make-up of the terrorist; a guarantee that sacrifice will be rewarded with eternal happiness.

A verse of an old Irish rebel song devoted to the IRA goes:

'Upon their shield, a stainless field,
the virtues blazoned bright,

'With temperance, and purity and
truth and honour dight;

'So now they stand at God's right
hand Who framed their dauntless way,

'Who taught them and Who brought
them the glory of the day!'

For someone not utterly drugged on the belief of the inseparability of god and cause, the idea of committing suicide in order to take the lives of other anonymous people is too utterly sick for contemplation. Allah, like the Christian God and his rivals, is a demanding and cruel god and without him and the imagined comfort of eternal salvation, it is hard to imagine the foul practice of suicide bombing or other sort of bombing existing.

Contact Details

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Central London branch.

Corres: Richard Botterill, 21 Ashwell Park, Harpenden, Herts AL5 5SG.

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email: richardbotterill@hotmail.com.
2nd & 4th Mon. 7.30. Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place, W1 (near Marble Arch)

Enfield and Haringey branch. Tues. 8pm. Angel Community Centre, Raynham Rd, N18. Corres: 17 Dorset Road, N22 7SL.

email: julianvein@blueyonder.co.uk

South London branch. 1st Mon. 7.45pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: **020 7622 3811**

West London branch. 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (Corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY

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Dundee. Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX. Tel: **01328 541643**

West Lothian. 2nd and 4th Weds in month, 7.30-9.30. Lanthorn Community Centre, Kennilworth Rise, Dedridge, Livingston. Corres: Matt Culbert, 53 Falcon Brae, Ladywell, Livingston, West Lothian, EH5 6UW. Tel: **01506 462359**

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COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

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Socialist Robots...

In Rossum's *Universal Robots* (1921), the best workers are the cheapest ones with the fewest needs, who know only how to work, have no humanity, remember everything but think of nothing new. In fact, they are Robots, humanoids genetically engineered for a life of drudgery, as the Czech word 'robot' indicates. Although the concept of artificial humans goes back much further than Capak's play, it is since his work that ideas of mechanical men and women created to serve humanity have really taken off, and increasingly are no longer restricted to film, TV and literature.

Modern robots, however, have little in common with Capak's. Bolted to the floor, they are computer-controlled mechanical arms capable of such tasks as painting, welding, riveting, loading and stacking, and are seen in increasing numbers throughout the manufacturing industry. Whether they should be classed as robots is debatable, for they fail utterly to resemble what we commonly understand to be a robot; that is, a mechanical human.

Such robots have been in development for some time, particularly in Japan. ASIMO, for example, is Honda's 4-foot tall humanoid robot which can walk, run, climb stairs and respond to fifty different Japanese phrases. Sony's QRIO can connect wirelessly to the internet and get up should it fall. And Toyota's 'Partner' robot can inflate its mechanical lungs, purse its artificial lips and play the trumpet (*The Economist Technology Quarter*, March 12th 2005). But that's about all they can do, and as yet are a very long way from the C3POs, Datas, and Terminators of film and TV.

As we move toward socialism, and as technology advances, it is not unlikely that a sentient, humanoid robot capable of speech, thought, mobility, and invested with something

Asimo - just wants to be loved



of a personality (to ease communication with it and reinforce its 'humanoid' characteristics), will be created, should present trends continue. However, they could present

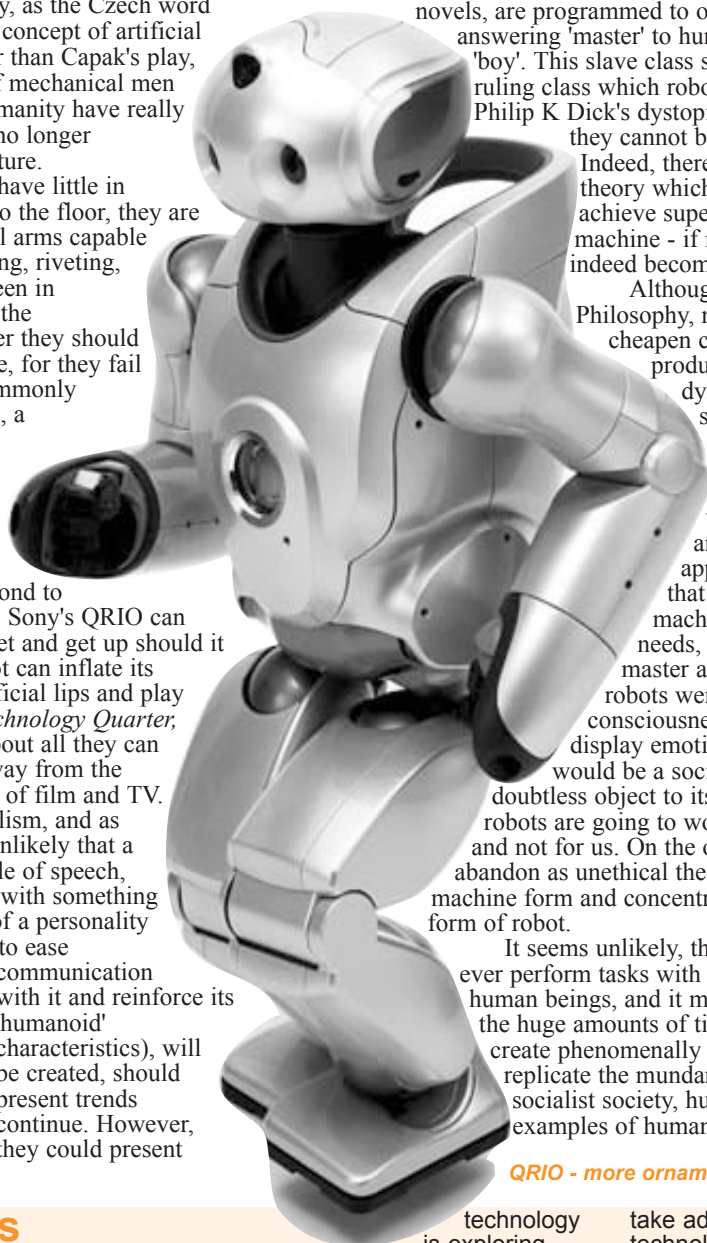
something of a problem for socialism, for in a society where all people are considered equal, what relationship will we have with artificial people? Will organic humans be more equal than inorganic ones?

Naturally, science-fiction has much to say on this subject. Isaac Asimov's robots, featured in many of his short stories and novels, are programmed to obediently serve humanity, even answering 'master' to humans, who often address them as 'boy'. This slave class stands in complete contrast to the ruling class which robots have evolved to become in Philip K Dick's dystopian futures, and are so lifelike that they cannot be distinguished from human beings. Indeed, there are certain strands of evolutionary theory which suggest that inorganic life will achieve superiority over organic life so that the machine - if machine is the right word - may indeed become the dominant life form.

Although Marx, in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, noted that machinery 'is intended to cheapen commodities' and 'is a means for producing surplus value', the exploratory dynamic of science is not always suppressed by the confines and limitations of capitalism and humanoid robots may continue to be developed into socialism, even though they are hugely expensive and as yet have no practical applications. However, it's unlikely that socialists would want a servant, machine or otherwise, to see to their needs, for it would clearly necessitate a master and servant relationship. And if robots were programmed with a consciousness, as well as the capacity to display emotive behaviour, we can assume it would be a socialist consciousness and would doubtless object to its servitude. If sentient humanoid robots are going to work at all, it must be alongside us and not for us. On the other hand, we may altogether abandon as unethical the project of replicating human life in machine form and concentrate solely on the non-humanoid form of robot.

It seems unlikely, though, that such machines could ever perform tasks with the dexterity, creativity and joy of human beings, and it may be counter-productive to invest the huge amounts of time and resources necessary to create phenomenally complex machines if they can only replicate the mundane work of Capak's originals. For a socialist society, humanoid robots may be breathtaking examples of human ingenuity, but little more.

QRIO - more ornament than use at present



...and Robocheffs

Life hectic? Too much stress? Can't be bothered to cook? Just go to your domestic organic recycler, tap in the code for 'chicken and chips', and the appropriate molecules are extracted from your underground organic waste vault (ugh) and reassembled into piping hot rosemary-flavoured poule et frites (yummy). What's even better, as this 'chicken' never lived to suffer in the first place, vegetarians might like it too. Far-fetched? Well, just a bit. This kind of molecular assembly, though theoretically possible, is several horizons beyond the current nanotechnology horizon, and at present only exists as the fabulous 'food replicator' seen on the Starship Enterprise.

With the Bush administration's determination to get humans back into space and on their way to Mars via the International Space Station, one offshoot

technology is exploring ways to make the food available to astronauts more interesting and varied (*New Scientist*, August 20). Since food ingredients in space have to have a long shelf-life without refrigeration, the challenge is to produce variety out of a limited repertoire. The new idea is to devise a mathematical language or 'grammar' to describe different foods, and then program a virtual food machine to synthesise or simulate these foods out of raw ingredients. While the feasibility of making such a machine compact enough for space flight is doubtful, with no restriction on size or number of ingredients the land-based potential is enormous. The machine could be programmed to develop its own recipes, perhaps by an evolutionary process, so that unthinkably interesting new foods could be born.

Pathfinders may sometimes give the impression that socialism will always

take advantage of any labour-saving technology that capitalism happens to come up with, but in this particular case it may well do the opposite. While the drive to automate tedious, arduous or dangerous work is clearly worthwhile, what is more questionable is whether we would ever want to automate enjoyable social practices. Even if a machine could come up with a recipe we never thought of, would it be worth it? In capitalism, where cut-throat competition makes the buck more important than the buzz, speed, innovation and output are what matter. Capitalism is always ruining the fun in everything, so that people begin to perceive almost any creative activity as dreary work to be avoided, or given to machines. In socialism, with its conflation of work and play at the centre of the social ethic, there will be some things people will always prefer to do themselves, and for each other, without the robots taking over. Sex is definitely one. Maybe cooking is another.

Extreme views

Dear Editors

I was not impressed with your card handed to me on the march in Edinburgh last month [July].



Your connection Make Poverty History with Capitalism was in very bad taste and I consider it a

disgrace. I am aware of the shortcomings of the present trading system and will continue to campaign for the aims of the Trade Justice Movement of which I am a member locally. However I do not want to be associated with your extreme views or the way you carry out your activities.

PHIL BARLOW, NOTTINGHAM

World problems

Dear Editors,

Many problems are faced today most especially in economical and political spheres of life. For instance, wars, workers' strikes, corruption, riots, and many others. These most happen in developing countries and some few developed countries and the influence comes direct from world powers.

The selfish ideas of the world powers, being hidden by these powers, are the root cause of the world atrocities in pretext that they are fighting terrorism, ending colonialism, fighting dictatorship among other decisive, political and economic selfish ideas.

It is a great challenge for all socialists to pronounce and advocate for socialist principles without fear or frustration from selfish politicians so that we come to save the world from the ongoing atrocities escalating from selfishness of those who only look for ways of getting richer and richer at the expense of the majority.

JOSEPH BALIKUDEMBE, KAMPALA, Uganda

Socialism, scientific and humanistic

Dear Editors

Since January the Pathfinders page has been a valuable addition to the *Socialist Standard*. In discussing socialism it recognises that we need to be consciously working for something, not simply against something.

In July I argued against the idea that voting and democracy would be significantly advanced by means of new technology. After reading the August Pathfinders I realise that my questioning of new technology developed within capitalism goes deeper than that. It is a matter of some interpretations of scientific socialism focusing on things and humanistic socialism (as I see it) focusing on people. Don't get me wrong - I'm not against scientific socialism. I just think that Pathfinders puts too much emphasis on things and not enough on people.

"If capitalism fed, clothed and looked after its people in peace and without coercion, socialism would not be disproved but it would be unnecessary." There is no evidence that capitalism can be changed to adequately feed and clothe all the world's population without coercion. So the idea that it can do these things remains a doubtful hypothesis. But even if capitalism could change its spots in the ways outlined, would that be the end of the socialist campaign for system change? I think not. Socialism is not about changes to capitalism - it is about replacing capitalism with another system. It is about a world society based on giving and taking, not on buying and selling.

"... the ability to micro-produce with minimal waste and distribution costs remains one of the most exciting innovations socialist society could possibly inherit." Pathfinders' fire is obviously lit by socialist methods of producing and distributing things. My fire is lit by the prospect of socialist relations between people (which will, of course, lead to changes in production, distribution, and much else).

STAN PARKER, LONDON N3.

Dear Editors,

Some people, including some socialists, used to get quite irritated about the way that recorded laughter was inserted into, first radio, then television, shows that went under the generic heading of comedy. But we have slowly got used to this feature of modern life in capitalist society. It is almost universal now. It is applied to quality comedy and poor comedy; those with real audiences and those with no possibility of an audience at all in the location of the action. Like antidepressant drugs, canned laughter is prescribed for nearly everybody. Because, let's face it, much of the time, if you didn't laugh, you'd cry.

Many aspects of living in this increasingly dysfunctional world society are moving in the same direction. In Japan, as well as North America and Europe shopping has become the diversionary avenue of seeking feel-good factors. Clothes, to make us feel good about our appearance; various types of car, to make us comfortable about our status among our neighbours; health foods, to make us feel healthy; exotic foods to make us feel opulent; gyms, to make us feel confident or even superior about our physical fitness and sexual attractiveness. Houses, gardens, kitchens, etc., etc. Our electronic gadgetry, from mobile phones and digital cameras to MP3 recorders and players, offer us more power to do things we hadn't even thought of and probably will never try.

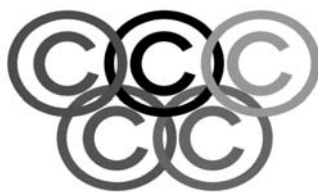
The planet is being pillaged, plundered and polluted to make commodities for us to buy, partly because we need them and capital must have the flow of profit, but increasingly in the effort to obliterate our basic hunger for freedom, the one thing we cannot have. Like canned laughter, the temporary lift we get from commodity gratification is artificial, false. It hides a bad joke.

RON COOK, WEST BROMWICH

This One Will Run and Run

The news that the 2012 Olympic Games had been awarded to London sent the Stock Exchange Index up to a three-year high - the biggest gains in share price were for a company that specialises in wiring sports stadia and other landmark attractions. Clearly many companies hope for an economic bonanza, especially those involved in construction and the hotel industry. Staging the games may be enormously expensive, but some firms at least will make an awful lot of money out of it. The Olympics, after all, are only in passing about sport; they are also about nationalism and, primarily, profits.

Only a small part of the income will come from ticket sales - the overwhelming majority is from the sale of broadcasting rights and corporate sponsorship. So important is this last point that companies who aren't official sponsors are likely to be banned from associating themselves with the games in any way (*Evening Standard* 7 July). The government will guide an Olympics Bill through parliament, designed among other things to prevent 'ambush advertising', where companies pass themselves off as somehow linked to the games, whether as sponsors or not. However ludicrous this sounds, it's not unique. The 2003 cricket World Cup in South Africa was sponsored by Pepsi, and spectators drinking Coca-Cola were ejected from



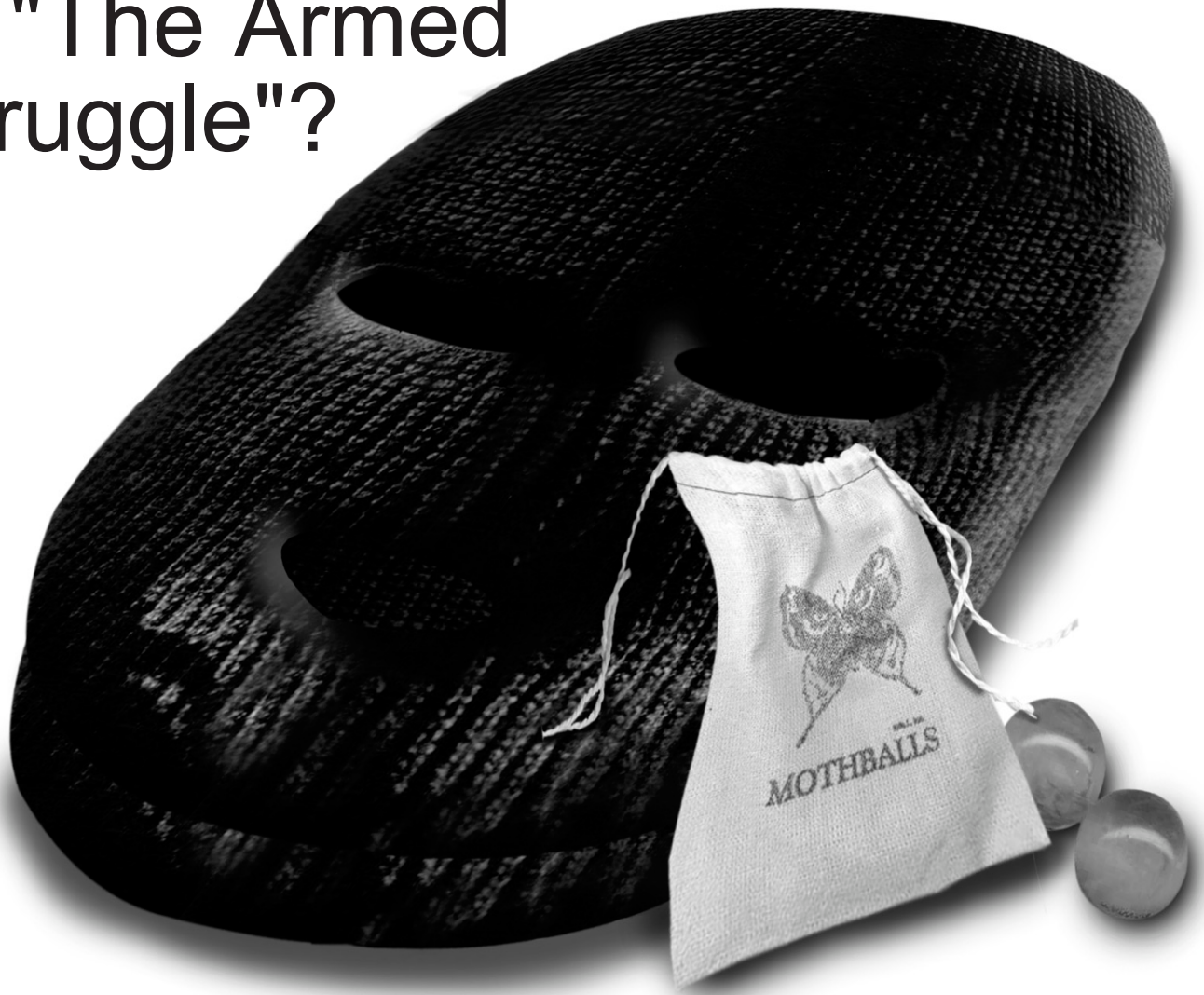
venues; moreover, this was sanctioned by new marketing laws introduced by the government. (*In No Logo* Naomi Klein mentions an American high school which held an official Coke Day with lots of promotional activities, but where one student was suspended for going to school in a T-shirt with a Pepsi logo.) At the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, companies had to pay to use any kind of Olympic name or logo (including some that had been established for years under the name of 'Olympic').

One of the principles of capitalism is that ownership of something gives you exclusive rights over its use, including whether, and how, you allow others to have access to it. This applies not just to physical things such as land, oil, rivers and factories but also to ideas and inventions - hence the development of patents and protection for 'intellectual property', and the clamping down on counterfeit and imitation goods. And, as we can now see, it also holds for particular names and logos, and for advertising space.

The International Olympic Committee jealously guards its control over the Olympic name and advertising at the games venues. Companies who pay hefty fees for sponsorship buy the 'right' to advertise and sell their products, to the exclusion of any direct competitors. Just as football stadia are now named after corporations and products such as Reebok and Walkers' Crisps, and clubs do their

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IRA: Is it Really the End of "The Armed Struggle"?



The leadership of Oglai na h'Eireann has formally ordered an end to the armed campaign. This will take effect from 4pm this afternoon. All IRA units have been ordered to dump arms" (Extract from IRA statement of 28 July)

So the IRA has given up the gun for the ballot box - but not for the first time.

In 1956 it was reluctantly pushed by its young activists to begin a 'Border Campaign'. Within a few months the campaign had deteriorated into cutting down a few telegraph poles and issuing grandiose statements about the activities of their commandos. Away from the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic this new phase of the interminable 'troubles' was hardly noticed. Everybody but the IRA knew their campaign was going nowhere. Internment, both in the north and in the south, emaciated the movement and inevitably internal disputes in the internment camps began to fester among the volunteers.

It took the IRA's Army Council five more years before it announced the formal termination of the Border Campaign but at last, in 1962, Oglai na h'Eireann, the Irish Republican Army, issued what was as near as possible a notice of surrender. It admitted that it had not achieved the necessary

support from the nationalist (Catholic) community in Northern Ireland; in fact it castigated the nationalists claiming that they had sold 'their heritage for a mess of pottage' - a reference to the scheme of welfare capitalism introduced in Britain after the war and extended to Northern Ireland.

Henceforth, the IRA was taking the gun out of Irish politics - the IRA spokesperson, the legendary 'P O'Neill', actually said that - and would confine its activities to political campaigns on social issues.

Behind the scenes a coterie of Leninists had defeated the death-or-glory boys of traditional Republicanism and took control of the IRA's Army Council. This element saw the IRA as the nucleus of a political movement that would use the atrocious political and social conditions in the North as a catalyst for uniting workers who traditionally opposed one another on religious grounds. The Rosary brigade, those for whom republicanism and Catholicism were synonymous terms, were appalled by this 'rank communism' and left the movement.

The IRA then transformed itself into 'Republican Clubs' in furtherance of its plans. Up to then, the Unionist government had claimed to accept the right of

republicans to use constitutional means to achieve a united Ireland. Such a claim did not represent a political threat to Unionism, which, at the birth of the state in 1921, had helped demographically tailor the territory of Northern Ireland to ensure that they had a two-to-one majority based on the religious topography of the six north-eastern counties of the ancient Province of Ulster. Despite this guarantee, they immediately banned the Republican Clubs.

Traditionally, the IRA had based its claim to use physical force on the results of the elections of 1918 which was the last general election held in Ireland before the country was arbitrarily divided by the British government. Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, won an overall majority in that election and established the first Dail Eireann which was effectively banned by the British.

Six counties

A brutal guerrilla war ensued during which the Westminster politicians showed that they were the 'moral' equal of those they called terrorists by recruiting mercenaries who terrorised the populace in an effort to frighten support away from the IRA. The tactic had the reverse effect but eventually, as now, British ministers sat down with the 'terrorists'. Under threat, an unsatisfactory

peace deal was negotiated which divided Ireland into the 26-county Irish Free State and the 6-county state of Northern Ireland.

This 'solution' split the IRA and resulted in a bloody civil war between Free State forces - armed by the British - and a rump of the IRA who were dubbed 'Irregulars'. The latter, the ideological antecedents of the present Provisional IRA, were defeated and they and their followers glumly pronounced that both the new governments on the Island of Ireland were 'illegal' and a betrayal of the holy grail of 'The Republic' as proclaimed by the new-born IRA in the insurrection of 1916. Dail Eireann, the legend went, had transferred its executive authority to the Army Council of the IRA and, thenceforth, any group claiming to be the rightful heirs of the 1916 Declaration of the Republic could grandiosely claim to be the de facto government of Ireland.

The political leader and, then, icon of the defeated Irregulars was Eamon De Valera. Despite being the main architect of the politics that resulted in the Civil War 'Dev', as he was known, was a pragmatic politician who realised the absurdity of further military adventures against the Free State. In 1926 he formed a new political party, Fianna Fail, to challenge the party in government, Cumann na nGaedheal (later, as now, Fine Gael) and in 1932 Fianna Fail won an outright victory at a general election and De Valera became Taoiseach. It was a bad day for later incarnations of the IRA, for despite having created the genre of dissident Republicans, Dev, who held power until 1948, proved a bitter, even vicious, enemy of the IRA.

The modern IRA

It is important to take this brief look back at the history of the IRA because it raises an important question. Following the Civil War in 1922, the split within the movement and then the desertion of De Valera, the organisation never regained any real political influence in Ireland until 1970 and the establishment of yet another breakaway movement, the Provisional IRA.

The IRA admitted in 1962 that the Northern Catholic nationalists had not supported its brief, inglorious 'border campaign' but what were the new material conditions that brought about general Catholic support for the Provisional IRA after 1970? And what lessons may it have for the future, both in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain which is now facing a terrorist threat of an even more menacing kind?

The IRA's 1962 decision to pursue a constitutional campaign based on social issues paradoxically fused with an aspect of the new mood of northern nationalists who had earlier rejected the IRA. Generally, after the war and the benefits of some UK social reforms, nationalists were becoming increasingly reconciled to acceptance of the northern state. In 1965 Britain and the Republic of Ireland signed a Free Trade Agreement and after this the few nationalist politicians in the Northern Ireland parliament at Stormont accepted the role (and the salaries) of Her Majesty's Opposition. But, if they were going to be loyal then they wanted the apparatus of religious discrimination and vote-rigging to be dismantled.

What happened was that the Republicans managed to tap into this mood.



A NICRA sitdown protest, November 1968



A victim of the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre

Unionist politicians and fascist-type bigots like the hot-gospeller Ian Paisley, were to claim that the subsequent Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement was a creature of the IRA but it wasn't this simple; in fact it was established by a younger, more active genre of nationalists, products of the 1944 British Education Acts, and it resulted in a coalescing of anti-Unionist factions including the IRA in its Republican Clubs incarnation.

Taking its cue from the American Civil Rights campaign, the new movement adopted the name Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) and proceeded to use the same tactics of massed demonstrations and protests in pursuit of its demands. The Unionist Prime Minister, Captain Terence O'Neill, was not averse to granting the basic demands of the NICRA and had he been able to do so it is likely that Catholic nationalist anger would have been defused and the violence of the following thirty years avoided but Paisley was rousing old anti-Catholic bigotries in the unionist community - and, incidentally, using that bigotry to forge a political career

that would bring rewards well beyond his modest Bible-thumping talents.

Faced with government bans, NICRA turned to civil disobedience and the government ordered the armed police, which the Unionists had traditionally used as their private army, to use force against 'illegal' demonstrations. Television pictures showing the police (RUC) attacking non-violent marchers were flashed around the world much to the discomfort of the British government which was the ultimate authority in Northern Ireland.

Events were hurrying towards a bitter sectarian pogrom. Protestant loyalists, assisted by the B Specials (an exclusively Protestant paramilitary auxiliary police force) torched Catholic homes; some ex-IRA men went to the Dublin leadership of the IRA to seek arms to defend the Catholic ghettos in Belfast and Derry and were told that IRA arms would not be made available for sectarian warfare. In Belfast, Republican dissidents were appalled at this response; the 'communist' leadership was denounced by much of the rank-and-file and the Provisional IRA was born, leaving two IRA's - the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA, both claiming to be the executive heirs of the only legitimate Dail Eireann. Extreme Catholic conservatives within the Irish government, fearful of the consequences of 'communist' influences, helped to procure arms for the new PIRA.

Pawns in a game

The rest is the story of the brutal conflict that became Northern Ireland's 'Dirty War'. Now the IRA is standing down its foot soldiers. There were three sides to the war: the British Army/RUC, the Provisional IRA and the various Protestant paramilitary organisations. As a first step in accounting, we can say that none can claim victory. It is always the working class that make up the pawns in armies, legal and illegal, and the end of a war never brings them victory. The other thousands who died were just the innocent victims of those who were at war.

Ironically, Paisley's strident anti-Catholicism played a major role in galvanising the Catholics into open rebellion. 'No truck with Dublin' has been his war cry but his hard-line bigotry has now brought about a situation of virtual joint authority between London and Dublin in the affairs of Northern Ireland. Paisley, whose fight for Ulster went only as far as throwing snowballs at Jack Lynch when he visited Stormont as Irish Taoiseach, is obliged to discuss policy with both the British and Irish Prime Ministers.

On the other hand, the Provisional IRA, whose war aim was to end partition, drive out the British and abolish the state of Northern Ireland have succeeded only in establishing a claim to be part of the political administration of the state they set out to abolish!

Eventually the politicians on both sides will have to reach an accommodation to work the structures of government established by the Good Friday Agreement. The salaries and the expenses are good and the leaders can write of a finish to a satisfactory war.

But what have the workers across the infamous religious divide got? As so many times before, they have simply been used as pawns. ■

RICHARD MONTAGUE

We have conclusive proof that Tony Blair doesn't read the Socialist Standard. In these pages last month, we warned that trying to suppress religion or religious expression is not going to stem any terror threat. Yet now, the Prime Minister has stood before the media, vowing to close down Mosques where religious extremism is preached. Yet, censorship has never worked to suppress any ideology or movement.

The Blairites have long been proud of their writing the European Convention of Human Rights into British law. Yet Tony Blair has stood before the media vowing to amend the act so as to enable his government to use draconian powers against those it suspects - but cannot prove in a court of law - to be involved in the promotion of terrorism. We have, also, in these pages before, warned that human rights legislation was a paper thin protection against the might of the organised violence of the state. Thus it proves, when inalienable rights get in the way of untrammelled state power, they get torn asunder. There are rights, but only when they don't matter, it seems.

Tony Blair has stood before the media of the world, venting sound and fury because the levers of state he controls with such ultimate power are inadequate to stem the terrorist tide. Kings and Prime Ministers have long been



Blair - bit of a Cnut, but still can't stop the tide

able to do whatever they pleased with the machinery of state - but their record in stopping the seas is somewhat dismal. The state has ultimate

power over our bodies - life or death, but it reaches its limits at people's minds.

People's consciousness is not something that can be shaped by fiat - a minuted cabinet meeting declaring that all inhabitants of Britain will be loyal citizens. People's consciousness is an outgrowth of their life every bit as much as their arms or their hair. Socialists know from long (and bitter) experience, that merely expounding an idea to someone will not move them. There has to be the basis of agreement already in their minds, based on their experience of the world and their values, for any ideas to take hold.

The notion that merely preaching is enough to turn people into suicide bombers is itself a part of the same flawed premise upon which religion is based: that people choose to believe. The idea that people are outside the world around them, separate from the chains of causation they can see in nature. It is also a projection of the self-image of the great leaders who believe that they can bend people's wills to whatever they wish, like some great impresario in the circus ring. Religion itself is subject to materialist explanation. It is, in fact, an effort of human beings to understand the world around them. Beginning with the ancient religions that explained natural phenomena in terms of beings with human-like minds controlling events. That is, early cultures explained the world with reference to the thing they knew best,

humans and human behaviour. Projecting human relationships on natural objects - for instance by making gifts to the fields and rivers in return for favours like not flooding.

As civilisation grew, religion - as the attempt to understand the world - changed to adapt to the new environment. Different types of gods grew up, who behaved suspiciously like the despots who governed the world at that time. The growth of widespread kingdoms lead to the development of divisions of labour which established priestly castes and codified myths to establish a common religious narrative (which helped in co-ordinating things like the kingdom-wide harvesting of crops). The essential ingredient, though, of projecting a human gift relationship on the world remained.

Around the first century of the Common Era (CE) this process led to the spread of the great monotheistic religions. At the time, Rome was spreading its influence over the near east. As trade and commerce extended, local tribal formations became more fluid, and so the image of one Emperor ruling over a vast differentiated domain easily gave rise to the idea of one God ruling over the entire Earth. People were obliged to obey that God much as they would have to obey the Emperor, lest they face his fierce and arbitrary wrath. The religion that most successfully encompassed that sort of world experience was Christianity, which grew to be the dominant and official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century CE under Constantine.

Likewise, Islam (Literally 'Submission to the will of god') emerged around 600 CE - propagated by Muhammed, a wealthy and well-travelled merchant. The Arab peoples at that time were divided and living in the shadows of the great Byzantine and Persian Empires (empires characterised by centralised monotheistic religious uniformity). It was to Muhammed and his movement's advantage to copy this style of thinking and organising, as they began to spread their fledgling empire and unite the Arab tribes into a power.

That is, these religions in their time were rational observations of how both the natural and social worlds operated. Even, in some senses, progressive in their advancement of human understanding and the growth of civilisation. They stemmed from a need to understand a world that stretched beyond immediate apprehension and sense and spread over vast and intermingling empires. Lacking modern data capture or inquiry techniques, such empires could only be apprehended by metaphors for the



Religion and the limits of the State

emperors that ruled them.

The religions born then continued to be at the forefront of attempts to understand the world for many years, either as direct means of explaining phenomena, or as paradigms into which new explanations and observations could and must be incorporated. If everything happens by the will of god, then knowing the mind of god is the only logical form of investigative endeavour.

As data capture and the technology of natural science advanced over the subsequent thousand years, the value of the religious explanations began to be questioned. In Western Europe, this led to a division between the concept of science and of religion. As various physical world-truth claims of religion - such as that of the position of the Earth in relation to the Sun - came under sustained challenge - by Copernicus, in 1514 CE - the established religious elites fought back, using raw political power and wealth

This meant that the ideologues of religion came up with more and more ways to defend their world-view from the challenge of the new scientific methods - retreating (in some cases) to the point of defending religion as a mere personal preference in areas where facts could not be proved in the same way as in the natural sciences. That is, they clung on to the social sciences for a further three hundred years. All ethics and social theory was made by reference to the assumed existence of a despotic deity.

Class struggle broke out over



Cooking the Books (1)

The waste of competition

Supporters of capitalism praise competition to the skies, seeing it as a means of keeping prices down and of ensuring that "consumers" get what they want.

Socialists, on the other hand, have always seen economic competition as being (besides the cause of modern wars) an inefficient and wasteful way of distributing what people need and want. For a start, it involves an unnecessary multiplication of productive units and distribution outlets with all the extra resources this uses up. Then there are the resources used up in marketing and advertising, which is aimed merely at persuading people to buy from one firm or shop as opposed to another and which adds absolutely nothing to the amount of wealth in existence.

No wonder Marx commented on capitalism's "way of distributing products through trade, and its manner of competition" being "very wasteful of material resources" (Volume III of *Capital*, chapter 5 on "Economy in the use of constant capital").

So it was rather surprising to hear the head of a profit-seeking capitalist enterprise, Charles Allen, chief executive of ITV plc, echo this socialist criticism of capitalism in the evidence he gave on 7 June to a House of Lords committee looking into the renewal of the BBC's charter. Asked by the Bishop of Manchester (yes, it's part of the "democratic deficit" in Britain that bishops of the Church of England are automatically members of parliament) about possible co-operation with the BBC in the North-West, Allen replied that he was all in favour of the BBC, ITV and others sharing the same programme-making studios, adding:

"A lot of money is wasted through duplication: we have our own studios; they have their own studios; we have our own transmission; they have their own transmission; we have our own infrastructure; they have their own infrastructure. What I am really keen to do is actually get the money on the screen rather than wasted in infrastructure" (www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld/lduncorr/bbc0706.pdf).

Wasted in infrastructure! True, but this applies across the board to all manufacturing industry, services, shops and supermarkets. There's wasteful duplication (triplication, and more) there too.

What Allen apparently wants in broadcasting is the same sham competition as exists in the supply of electricity, gas and telephones. There's only one infrastructure here too - only one national electricity grid, for example - with competition limited to firms wasting resources on trying to steal customers from each other.

In socialism resources can be saved to produce needed and useful things by only having one type of distribution outlet in neighbourhoods and only one factory producing computers, cars, washing machines, etc in any one region. Then, we really could concentrate resources on producing best-quality useful things rather than wasting them on duplicated infrastructures.



religious impulse. As, however, technical competence was increasingly required for work, so has a growth of understanding of science and the world that sees much of western religion driven to either the merest shadow of its former acceptance, if not outright agnosticism (though many still accept the arguments of the theists over religion and belief over things which cannot be proven).

In many parts of the world, traditional religious castes still retain a strong sway - Catholic priests were wheeled out in Portugal to explain the euro, for instance. Where social and economic development has not provided a practical impetus to challenge the teachings and presumptions of religion, it has remained strong. Gaining a further power as a means of giving a sense of identity and community to ways of life that are under apparent external threat - as in parts of the Muslim world and their reaction to western economic domination. Also, people in politically marginalised and powerless communities - like much of the rural United States - are turning to religious fundamentalism in the face of their own lack of control over their own and their communities' lives.

The resurgence of the old authoritarian religions is a growing problem. Politicians who also like to think of themselves as believers do not want to challenge the presuppositions and premises of these religions, but instead try to incorporate them so as not to challenge the structure of existing society.

Socialists oppose religion for its anachronistic premises, for the barrier it presents to scientifically examining and controlling our own lives and destinies. Religion starts by placing humans outside the natural world - with anthropomorph deities shaping the world and people's free will allowing them to obey and believe. Humans are part of the world, and are amenable to scientific behavioural study, and it is understanding that that will allow us to liberate ourselves, and control ourselves and our destinies.

Argument alone will not suffice to remove religion and religious strife from the world, it will take the material interest of a common cause and a common struggle to build a democratic society where people stand in real relation to each other, not seeing each other reflected in the eyes of some ancient Middle Eastern despot's mad dream. .

PIK SMEET ■

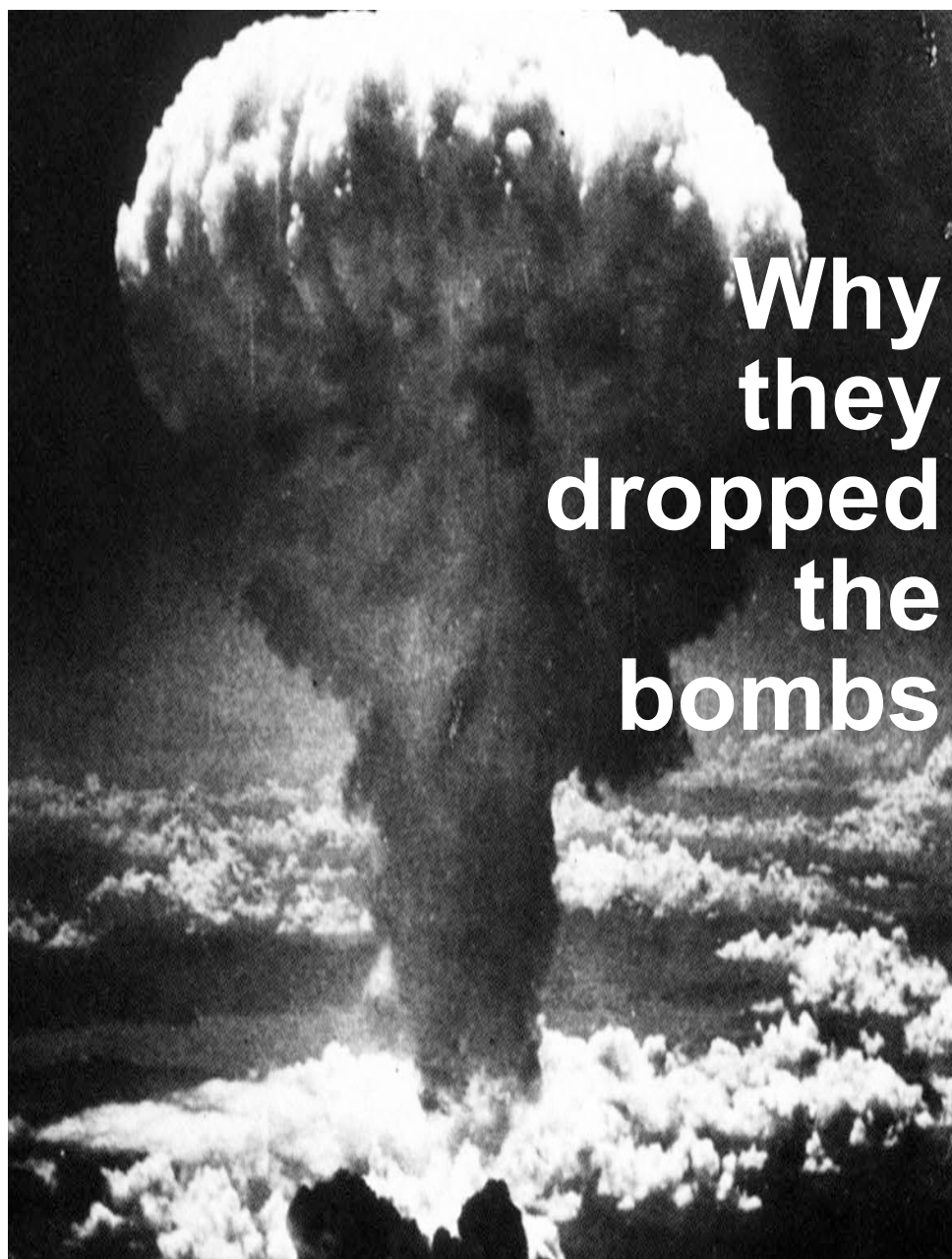
More on the Marxian socialist analysis of religion can be found at www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/pdf/sar.pdf and www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoe/1947/religion.htm



Europe. The rising bourgeoisie challenged their feudal masters, and in so doing challenged the idea of obeying the dictates of a despotic god, instead trying to privatise conscience and change the relationship to a more contractual one. This meant challenging the religious authorities on the ground of social science, and meant that other theories could be opened up for debate - empiricism and rationalism and later idealism. They challenged simply accepting facts and truth claims based on authority. They challenged obedience to a set of simplistic rules set down by the Emperor. It was a revolutionary challenge.

This challenge lasted only as long as there was a stake in it. Once the bourgeoisie was finally ensured of power, the religious questions didn't matter as much, and in fact proved to be a useful way of defending their new found supremacy from the challenge of the nascent working class. The same weapon of social science which helped them to power was now being used against them, to show how their rule was exploitative and domineering. The old religion became a means of justifying their rule to themselves and to their subordinates, as they spread their system across the globe.

To the extent that the working class felt themselves powerless, they were willing to accept an explanation of the world that gave them some measure of understanding and control - much as for the humans at the formation of the first



Why they dropped the bombs

Last month saw the 60th anniversary of the dropping of atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The media mostly contented itself with repeating the myth that this was the lesser evil to continuing the war by conventional means. In a two-part article Richard Headicar uncovers the real reason for the bombings: to test the destructive power of a new weapon for use in future wars.

'Fat Man', the Nagasaki plutonium bomb, and what was left afterwards



A common charge levelled at those who challenge the (still largely believed) established myth concerning the dropping of the atomic

bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is that they do so from the comfortable perspective of hindsight. This view was most elegantly formulated by Albert R. Hunt, writing in the *Wall Street Journal* on 3 August 1995: "The critics view the situation through the prism of today and side-step both how the situation looked to decision-makers in 1945 and the political realities facing them".

At first glance a not unreasonable observation but one which, upon closer examination, is revealed as somewhat disingenuous. Firstly, because, given that such a vast amount of crucial and enlightening information was for many years kept secret (much still is), anything other than hindsight concerning many areas of knowledge would have been pure speculation. Secondly, because there existed a number of contemporary critics. Many of these were closely involved in the production of the bomb, others from the military and some, even, close to the president.

Before proceeding to disentangle the web of lies and deception surrounding this subject, it is important to emphasise that, whatever the reasons for the decision to drop the bombs, it was a consequence of a brutal and ruthless conflict between warring capitalist states. A British First Sea Lord once put it: "Moderation in war is imbecility". Today there are few military 'conventions' and any that remain are almost sure to be violated. Rest assured, had any one of the main protagonists in the Second World War obtained an atomic bomb before the United States, they would almost certainly have used it with a similar alacrity and disdain for human life.

Who took the decision to drop the bomb?

Although, of course, it was President Harry Truman who had to give final approval (British consent, a formality required by agreement, was readily granted) he was the new boy on the block relying heavily on his advisors. General Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project to manufacture the bomb, famously described Truman as "a little boy on a toboggan". Once the decision had been made to produce the atomic bomb and the process of manufacturing it had begun, it was always assumed by the military and politicians that it would be used. In that sense no actual decision was ever a real necessity.

Nevertheless, formalities and procedures were prudently followed and, in order to work out the practical details and make suitable recommendations, various committees were established. The two most important of these were the Interim Committee (political, plus a co-opted scientific panel) and the Target Committee (military and scientific). General Groves headed the Target Committee and although not a member of the Interim Committee, was always present at its meetings. He was an unswerving advocate for deployment of the bomb. As he bluntly explained: "It would not have looked well if I had been appointed to serve on a committee of civilians. But I was present at all meetings and I always considered it my duty to recommend that the bomb be dropped."

The chairman of the Interim Committee was the Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson. On 3 May 1945, he proposed a further member who was to have a most significant influence on events: James F. Byrnes, soon to become the Secretary of State to President Truman. His views on the dropping of the bomb were as rampantly in favour of those of Groves and



together they formed the irresistible force that, more than any other, led to the final cataclysmic devastation of those two unlucky Japanese cities. As the physicist Arthur H. Compton put it: "The Scientific Panel was not called to decide the question of whether the bomb should be used, but only how it should be used . . . it . . . seemed to be a forgone conclusion."

Minutes taken at the meeting of the Interim Committee on 1 June 1945 recorded:

"Mr Byrnes recommended and the committee agreed, that . . . the bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible; that it be used on a war plant surrounded by workers' homes; and that it be used without prior warning."

On 25 July 1945 a directive approved by the Secretary of War, but which had been previously composed by Groves, manifested US intentions and confirmed previous assumptions in its first two sections:

"(1) The 509 Composite Group, 20th Air Force will deliver its first special bomb as soon as weather will permit visual bombing after 3 August 1945 on one of the targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata and Nagasaki

"(2) Additional bombs will be delivered on the above targets as soon as made ready by the project staff."

Whether or not that directive constituted a decision and whether Stimson and Truman or Byrnes and Groves bore most responsibility for it remains a matter of some debate. The theory of the "forgone conclusion" gains some credibility from the response given to Groves when, in January 1945, he suggested to his immediate superior, Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall, that detailed plans should be drawn up for the employment of the bomb in war. He was told "see to it yourself".

Were they military targets?

"The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in the first instance to avoid, in so far as possible, the killing of civilians". President Harry S. Truman (9 August 1945).

All of the cities on the target list (like most reasonably sized cities in time of war) were of some military significance. Five of them, with the agreement of the Air Force, were to be spared any further aerial bombardment from May 1945 onwards. These were Hiroshima, Kyoto, Yokohama, Kokura Arsenal and Niigata. On the express orders of the Secretary of War, Stimson, Kyoto - considered to be the cultural centre of Japan and a beautiful city that Stimson had once visited - was removed from the list and Nagasaki took its place. The truth is, of course, that the US Air Force could have destroyed any military target that it chose to. Japanese air defences were practically non-existent and of Japan's sixty-six largest cities, fifty-nine had been destroyed; the seven remaining partly so. By the summer of 1945 only two cities

with populations exceeding a quarter of a million had not been assailed by incendiary raids.

Since Hiroshima was designated as a major port and home of Regional Army Headquarters and the northern sectors of Nagasaki contained the Mitsubishi Steel and Arms Works, why did they remain largely untouched (Hiroshima hardly damaged at all and Nagasaki comparatively unscathed)? The answer is provided by the proposals of the Target Committee, 27 April 1945:

"To enable us to assess accurately the effects of the bomb, the targets should not have been previously damaged by air raids."

Nagasaki had been bombed to some extent but it was only a late addition to the target list and was not first choice even on the day the bomb was dropped on it - that had been Kokura Arsenal.

Further recommendations made by the committee were that ". . . the first target be of such size that the damage would be confined within it, so that we could more definitely determine the power of the bomb". Then from a further meeting on 10 and 11 May came the clear (and fortunately documented) instruction: ". . . to neglect location of industrial areas as pin point target . . . [and] . . . to endeavour to place first gadget in center of selected city; that is, not to allow for later 1 or 2 gadgets for complete destruction."

To erase any lingering doubts a subsequent Bombing Survey Report stated: "Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen as targets because of their concentration of activities and population".

Was it necessary to drop the bombs?

One of the most commonly accepted beliefs is that, horrific though it was, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved millions of lives - Japanese as well as American - by bringing about a swift end to the war and forestalling a bloody invasion. We are reminded about the massive casualties already suffered by both sides in the Pacific War. Particularly about the fanatical defence by the Japanese of Iwo Jima, Luzon and Okinawa. But although there were plans for an invasion they were contingency plans.

The first stage - "Olympic" - was to land at the island of Kyushu on 1 November 1945. No assault on the main island, Honshu, - "Coronet" - was scheduled until 1 March 1946. In the light of what we now know, it seems doubtful that the need for any kind of invasion would ever have arisen. Japan was certainly not defenceless. It still had a Home army of more than two million troops, many prepared to fight to the

death for their Emperor. Also, as well as conventional planes, there were thousands of kamikaze, mines, beach fortifications, etc, and the remnants of the navy. Their problem was one of deployment. But as the US Strategic Bombing Survey concluded, less than a year after the bomb had been dropped:

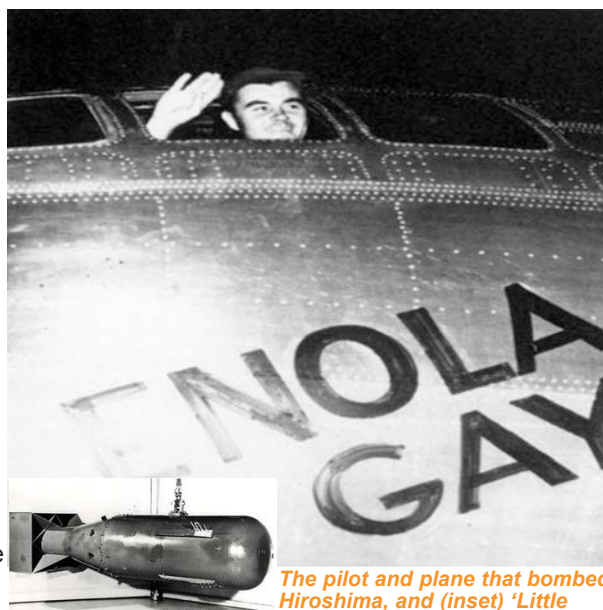
"Certainly before 31 December 1945 and in all probability before 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bomb had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

Some historians argue that the bombs were unnecessary precisely because Russia intended to enter the war, so the conclusion of the Strategic Bombing Survey was all the more remarkable. Less so, however, when the reality of the Japanese military situation is properly examined. Their navy was virtually finished; their army was described by Hanson W. Baldwin as consisting of "Green conscripts and second rate troops"; communication lines were in disarray; fuel was in extremely short supply; roads were in a poor state of repair; transport and transportation could be bombed at will; ports were becoming paralysed; food was scarce; illness through malnutrition was an increasing problem and (not surprisingly) public morale was diminishing by the day. In marked contrast to this, the US armed might remained immensely powerful.

All of this was known to the US



The blinding light burnt cloth patterns onto skin



The pilot and plane that bombed Hiroshima, and (inset) 'Little Boy', the uranium bomb used.

administration and military and the ludicrous estimates of projected invasion casualties - ranging from "hundreds of thousands" to "millions" - were post-war exaggerations designed to contribute to the successful establishment of a public justification for the dropping of the bombs. Major General Curtis E. LeMay expressed the truth quite bluntly a few weeks after formal surrender of the Japanese Emperor. "The atomic bomb," he stated, "had nothing to do with the end of the war".

But the reasons were not merely military ones.

(To be concluded next month)

RICHARD HEADICAR



Zapatistas, and Emiliano Zapata

Are we all Zapatistas?

We are all Zapatistas" has been painted on banners, walls and shouted at demonstrations in recent years. The slogan has been used by leftists, anarchists, advocates of fair-trade schemes and even for commercial gain. But who are the Zapatistas?

The Zapatistas take their name from Emiliano Zapata who led the *Ejército Libertador del Sur* (Liberation Army of the South) during the Mexican Revolutionary war from 1910 until his assassination in 1919. During the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz which preceded the revolution much of the land farmed by the indigenous people was enclosed to form *haciendas* or ranches for the production of food for export markets forcing peasants into, both wage- and debt-slavery to the often cruel ranch owners. Zapata's army sought to institute the Plan of Ayala for the repossession of the *haciendas* for landless peasants where pre-enclosure legal titles existed and partial expropriation of land, with compensation, where legal titles didn't exist. The Liberation Army of the South initially fought the federal forces who sought to uphold the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Zapata's army also fought the constitutionalist forces which eventually replaced Díaz as well as the intervening military dictatorship.

Despite the defeat of Zapata's army, the 1917 Mexican Constitution contained a

provision for the return of communal lands appropriated by the *haciendas* and to provide new lands called *ejidos* to landless peasants. Communal lands and *ejidos* are owned by the people of a village and plots within the designated areas are divided amongst individual families to work. However, this article of the constitution was never fully implemented, or yielded only small or unproductive land areas to the peasants. In 1992, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari revoked the constitutional commitment protecting communal land from private ownership in preparation for implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The NAFTA would also remove agricultural price support affecting peasants who were increasingly reliant on small scale cash crop production.

On the day the NAFTA came into force the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN, Zapatista Army of National Liberation) officially declared war on the Mexican government and invaded six main population centres and many ranches in the Chiapas region of south eastern Mexico. It is the EZLN and their supporters that are referred to as Zapatistas.

Open conflict in Chiapas lasted twelve bloody days in which hundreds lost their lives mainly due to aerial bombardment of EZLN-held towns by the Mexican army. By 1995, tens of thousands of troops were stationed in the region. There has been

little open combat since, but a network of checkpoints, army patrols, military incursions and alliances with local paramilitary groups have been used to intimidate and wear down the EZLN. The EZLN signed an accord with the Mexican Government in 1996 to institute peace and political rights for the people of Chiapas, though the government later reneged on many of the provisions. Paramilitaries, who have subsequently been linked to local landowners and ruling party officials, assassinated 45 Zapatistas in the town of Acteal in December 1997.

Chiapas is about the same size (area and population) as the Republic of Ireland. The area has a long history of conflict over land. Peasants have been forced onto the thin, rocky soils and steep slopes of the highlands with the encroachment of cattle ranching, coffee and sugar plantations from the more fertile lowland regions. Land availability has also been reduced by forestry and mineral, gas and oil extraction operations. Migration from neighbouring Guatemala, migration of those fleeing poverty in Mexico and the return of many of those who had migrated to urban areas for employment after crisis of capitalism in the early 1980s caused rapid population increase and eventual retreat into the inhospitable Lacandon jungle where the Zapatista rebellion is centred.

The EZLN was formed in the early 1980s by Leninists who had migrated into

the Chiapas jungle to lead the peasantry to revolution. One of those who joined the EZLN was the man now known as Subcommandante Marcos, the Zapatista's military leader and most famous spokesman. The EZLN found that many of the peasants there could not support the idea of the revolutionary vanguard and language of 'Marxism'. What followed was what Marcos calls a period of "indianization". The Leninist founders of the EZLN steeped themselves in native Mayan culture. In the words of Marcos, quoted by Yvon Le Bot (*El Sueño Zapatista*, 1997):

"Suddenly the revolution transformed itself into something essentially moral. Ethical. More than the redistribution of wealth or the expropriation of the means of production, the revolution began to be the possibility for a human being to have a space for dignity."

The "indianization" of the EZLN seemed to infuse the organisation with the local traditions of direct and decentralised democracy. However, in material terms the EZLN retained much of the previous reformist ideology. The *Declaration of War*, written in 1993, stated that the EZLN was acting legitimately to overthrow the ruling government because of their unconstitutional actions. The statement also says that the EZLN proudly carry the national flag into battle.

In June this year the EZLN announced a new political initiative in the *Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona*. They suggest a national campaign,

"which will be clearly of the left, or anti-capitalist, or anti-neoliberal, or for justice, democracy and liberty for the Mexican people, in order to demand that we make a new Constitution, new laws which take into account the demands of the Mexican people, which are: housing, land, work, food, health, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty and peace. We are also letting you know that the EZLN will establish a policy of alliances with non-electoral organizations and movements which define themselves, in theory and practice, as being of the left, . . ."

The stipulations for organisations wishing to join the national campaign are a democratic structure and a "clear commitment for joint and co-ordinated defence of national sovereignty, with intransigent opposition to privatization attempts of electricity, oil, water and natural resources." In addition, the Zapatistas offered food aid to Cuba for their resistance to the USA's embargo, express admiration for Che Guevara and Simon Bolivar and offered to send handicrafts, coffee or soup to activists in Europe to help with the struggle against neo-liberalism. The Zapatistas clearly think that capitalism can be run in the interests of the workers through state possession of industry and with the absence of the intervention by foreign capital.

The EZLN stopped making demands for constitutional rights from the Mexican government in 2001 and began to form a state within a state. This is described by Marcos in *Chiapas: The Thirteenth Step* as involving the withdrawal of the EZLN from civil matters and establishment of self-governing villages or Autonomous

Municipalities, with recallable and rotated functionaries. In August 2003, the 'Juntas of Good Government' were formed. These are regional councils which take the functions of administering justice, taxation, healthcare, education, housing, land, work, food, commerce, information and culture, and local movement from the EZLN. Marcos states that there have been improvements in living conditions as well as improvements in gender equality in the notoriously patriarchal peasant societies since the formation of 'Juntas of Good Government'.

However, the war is not over as EZLN recruitment and guerilla warfare training continues. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor report for 2004 highlights instances

defence services (e.g. missiles, rockets, torpedoes, bombs, mines and tanks) amounted to \$112million and \$436million, respectively, in 2003. The US military also spent \$1.25million on training the Mexican Army in 2003. The US training programmes are officially for counter-narcotic operations, however the Mexican Army have been observed using techniques learnt from the US military against the EZLN in Chiapas.

From the initial uprising the EZLN has publicised their struggle using the printed media and the internet. The writings of Subcommandante Marcos are available in many different editions and languages. The Chiapas conflict has become a celebrated cause for many activists across the world and has, in part,

been shaped by the involvement of activists. The Mexican Army's ceasefire has been attributed to the protests in Mexico's urban centres far away from the Chiapas. The presence of peace observers mostly drawn from

Zapatista support groups in the USA and Europe, as well as Mexico itself, is thought to have prevented excessive violence and intimidation by the Mexican army in Chiapas.

So well-known across the world is the name and image of the Zapatista that co-operatives in the Zapatista communities are producing and marketing their own brand of coffee which is distributed in Europe through various ethical shopping outlets. In 1994 *The Independent* (1 March) reported that Zapatista t-shirts, dolls and even condoms bearing an image of Marcos and the word 'uprising' have been marketed. In 2001, workers of a trendy clothing shop in Covent Garden selling Zapatista-inspired merchandise spray-painted Zapatista imagery and slogans on walls around major shopping areas in central London as well as dressing up as Zapatista guerrillas to hand out advertising material.

For socialists there are several encouraging things about the Zapatista movement: their apparent reliance on direct democracy and the solidarity shown to them by workers across the world. However, it is clear that the Zapatistas think their rallying cry of 'democracy, liberty and justice' can be fulfilled whilst the greatest amount of wealth, all it commands, and that we all depend upon remains in the hands of a minority.

So are we all Zapatistas? The workers and peasants of Chiapas have experienced some of the worst poverty and violence that humans have inflicted on each other. Workers across the world experience poverty and violence to some extent on a daily basis - it is the common bond that transcends national boundaries. This feature of our class-based society, an inevitable result of the social relation of worker to capital, has never been abolished by national liberation, state capitalism or 'good' government. The Zapatistas' desire for real democracy is commendable, however, this should not be limited to defence of perceived or actual gains within capitalist society but for the abolition of capitalism and establishment of world socialism. ■

PIERS HOBSON

"US involvement in the Chiapas rebellion is of no surprise given the fact that Mexico has the third-largest proven crude oil reserves in the Western Hemisphere"

of state and local police involvement in kidnappings and extortion, torture, unlawful killings, narcotics-related crime and the trafficking of illegal migrants in Chiapas. The report also states that there were numerous allegations of the use of excessive force and the violation of international humanitarian law against the Mexican Army



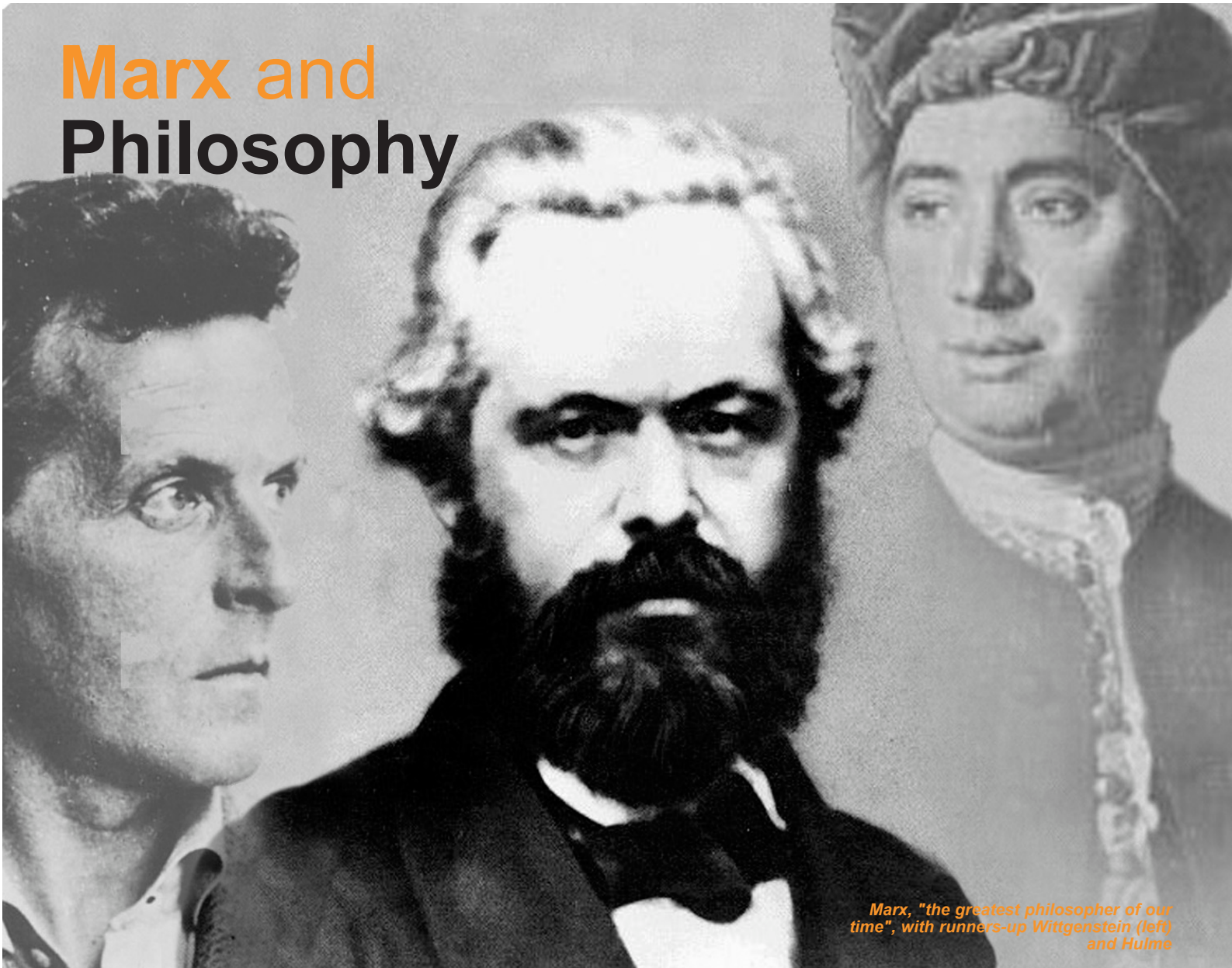
A Zapatista member at a recent rally

as well as continued violence by paramilitary groups.

There is also US involvement in the Chiapas rebellion which is perhaps of no surprise given the proximity and the fact that Mexico has the third-largest proven crude oil reserves in the Western Hemisphere and is the third-largest foreign supplier of petroleum to the United States, behind Canada and Saudi Arabia. PEMEX, the state-owned oil corporation, is a vital source of revenue for the Mexican state which is heavily indebted to the banks in the USA. Oil fields with one billion barrel potential have recently been discovered in Chiapas.

According to the Federation of American Scientists' Arms Sales Monitoring Project direct commercial sales of defence articles (e.g. machine guns, rifles, pistols, grenade launchers and ammunition) and

Marx and Philosophy



Marx, "the greatest philosopher of our time", with runners-up Wittgenstein (left) and Hume

In July BBC Radio 4 announced the result of its poll of listeners to find the "the greatest philosopher of our time". And the winner was - Karl Marx, as the first past the post with 28 percent of the 34,000 or so votes cast, way ahead of the second, the 18th century Scottish sceptic and agnostic, David Hume, with 13 percent, and the early 20th century logical-positivist, Ludwig Wittgenstein, with 7 percent.

There must be some sort of significance to Marx being selected by some 9,500 people. It would be nice to think that it was a vote for Marx's aim of a society without private property in the means of production, without money, the wages system or the state. More likely it represented a recognition of his contribution to the analysis of history and capitalism.

What did Marx have to say about philosophy? In fact, was he really a philosopher? He was certainly a doctor of philosophy in the literal sense, having obtained his doctorate - the trade unionists who associated with him in the 1860s in the First International knew him as "Dr Marx" - for a thesis on two Ancient Greek philosophers, Democritus and Epicurus. And in his early and mid twenties he thought and wrote extensively about philosophical problems, but then he reached the conclusion that abstract philosophising about "God", "the nature of Man" and "the meaning of life", which nearly all

philosophers had speculated about till then, was a pretty useless exercise and he abandoned it, at the age of 27, never to return to it. This was in fact more or less the same conclusion as reached by the two runners-up in the BBC poll, Hume and Wittgenstein.

What such philosophy was replaced by, for Marx, was the empirical, i.e. scientific, study and analysis of history and society, what has come to be known as the materialist conception of history. Strictly speaking, this is not really a philosophy but a theory and methodology of a particular science. Engels has had to take some stick for introducing the term "scientific socialism" but it is an accurate description of the outcome of Marx's (and his own) encounter with the German philosophy of his day.

Marx had come to socialism via German philosophy. Like many other radical-minded Germans in the 1840s he had been a "Young Hegelian", the name given to those who interpreted Hegel's philosophy in a radical way to justify the establishment of a democratic and secular state in Germany. Hegel himself (who had died in 1831) was no radical democrat, even though he had initially welcomed the French Revolution. Quite the opposite. By the 1820s he was a conservative defender of the Prussian State, almost its State philosopher. And he believed that

Christianity was true, with all that that implies in terms of the existence of a god with a plan for humanity and which intervenes in human affairs.

What appealed to German radicals in Hegel's philosophy was the concept of alienation (of something from its nature, or essence) and the view that (until the end of history) all human institutions were transitory and developed through intellectual criticism bringing out and then transcending the contradictions in the idea behind them. For Hegel this was all in a religious context (alienation was the alienation of Man from God and the end of history was the reconciliation of Man with God). The Young Hegelians completely rejected this and were highly critical of religion; in fact they made a speciality of this, presenting a secularised version of Hegel's system in which alienation was still the alienation of Man (with a capital M) but from Man's true nature, and the end of history was the reconciliation of Man with this nature, or human emancipation as they called it.

Most of them identified this with the establishment of a democratic republic. So did Marx, to begin with, but he came to the conclusion that political democracy, though desirable as a step forward for Germany, did not amount to full human emancipation, but only to a partial, "political" emancipation; "human" emancipation could only be

achieved by a society without private property, money or the state. Looking for an agent to achieve this, Marx identified the "proletariat" but conceived of in very philosophical terms as a social group that was "the object of no particular injustice but of injustice in general", "the complete loss of humanity and thus can only recover itself by a complete redemption of humanity". As he wrote at the end of his article "Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" published in February 1844: "The head of this emancipation [of Man] is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat." This is the same article in which occurs perhaps his most well-known saying "religion is the opium of the people", i.e., an illusory escape from real suffering. This was in fact aimed at his fellow Young Hegelians who seemed to imagine that religion could be made to disappear merely by criticising its irrationality. Marx's analysis of religion and of what was required to make it disappear went deeper:

"The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about their condition is a demand to give up a condition that requires illusion. The criticism of religion is therefore the germ of the criticism of the valley of tears whose halo is religion".

And:

"The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the highest being for man, that is, with the categorical imperative to overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and despised" (Translated by David McLellan in *Karl Marx: Early Texts*).

This is still a philosophical approach and it makes Marx, at this time, a humanist philosopher. Some find this enough, and eminently commendable (and Marx may even have got some votes in the BBC poll on this basis), and of course being a



Philosopher and defender of the Prussian State, Hegel

socialist has to rest in the end on wanting to "overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and despised".

Marx himself, however, was not satisfied to let the case for socialism rest on a mere philosophical theory that it provided the only social basis on which the "essence of Man" could be fully and finally realised. After continuing to initial with his previous philosophical position, he ended by rejecting the view that humans had any abstract "essence" from which they were alienated. As he put it in some notes jotted down in 1845:

"The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (*Theses on Feuerbach*).

This led him away from philosophical speculations about "human essence", what it was and how to realise it, to the study of the different "ensembles of social relations" within which humans had lived and to see history not as the development of any idea

but as the development from one "ensemble of social relations" to another in line with the development of the material forces of production. This gave socialism a much firmer basis than a simple "categorical imperative to overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated, enslaved, abandoned and despised". It made it the next stage in the development of human society, a stage which was both being prepared by the development of the current stage (capitalism) and the solution to the problems caused by capitalism's inherent internal contradictions. It kept the agent of its establishment as the class of wage workers, no longer considered as a class embodying all the sufferings of humanity, but as the class whose material interest would lead it to oppose and eventually abolish capitalism.

Marx still retained some of the language and concepts of his Young Hegelian past, but he gave them a new, materialist content. Thus, for instance, the alienation of the "proletariat" was no longer alienation from their human essence but alienation from the products of their own labour which came to dominate them in the form of capital as personified by a capitalist class; and "the emancipation of Man" became the emancipation of all humans through the abolition of classes and class rule by the world-wide working class pursuing its material interest; and he still referred to end of capitalism as the close of "the pre-history of human society". The imperative to change the world too remained, but addressed to the working class rather to philosophers. As he put it in 1845 in his parting shot at German philosophy: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (also from the *Theses on Feuerbach*). ■

ADAM BUICK



Cooking the Books (2)

Access denied

In June the BBC offered free downloads of live Beethoven concerts broadcast on Radio 3. It was a huge success. But not everyone was pleased. *The Independent* (10

July) reported:

"The BBC has been lambasted by classical music labels for making all nine of Beethoven's symphonies available for free download over the Internet. This week the BBC will announce there have been more than a million downloads of the symphonies during the month-long scheme. But the initiative has infuriated the bosses of leading classical record companies who argue the offer undermines the value of music and that any further offers would be unfair competition."

Yes of course (but they must mean the price, not the value, of music). If something is available free, nobody's going to pay for it. That is the ultimate "unfair competition". But the real question is different: if something can be provided free at little or no extra cost, why isn't it?

The answer is that, under capitalism, the basic economic law is "no profit, no production". So, no private capitalist is going to invest in providing something free to people. What would be the point? There'd be no profit in it.

The only institution which could do this would be the state, using resources obtained through taxation from the private capitalist sector. In Britain the state does in fact provide a number of services that are free at the point and time of use: roads, schools, parts of the health service, for instance. But these are seen as services for the capitalist class as a whole and as not involving competition with capitalist businesses trying to make a profit out of supplying the same service. (Certainly, there are capitalist firms lobbying for the right to cherry-pick the profitable parts of these services but no capitalist is going to be interested in investing in side streets or in rural roads.)

If the state does venture to supply free a potentially profitable service - as the BBC did on this occasion - then the private sector squeals "unfair, subsidised competition". As the British state and the BBC are fully committed to capitalism and its logic, the BBC's director general, Mark Thompson, rushed to reassure the profit-seeking commercial suppliers of music

recordings:

"In a speech to the British Phonographic Industry, the trade association for the recording industry, Mr Thompson tried to allay fears from the commercial sector. The anxiety, he said, 'boils down to two questions: is this the start of some new regular service from the BBC, in which, without warning and consultation, the public will be offered chunks of music free at the point of download which will inevitably distort the commercial market in music? And second, are there any limits to what the BBC might download? Could we wake up one morning to discover that half the BBC's musical archive is available on the net? The answer to these two questions is: no and no.'" (*Guardian*, 21 July).

But that precisely is what could well happen in socialism. Not just half the BBC's musical archives but the whole of them, as well as all other musical archives, could be made available for people to download freely. And why not? Let those against the provision of free music - and free telephones, free electricity, free transport, etc, for that matter - put up a case for restricting access to what people need and want when the resources to do this exist. If they can.

The British Communist Left by Mark Hayes (International Communist Current, 2005) £5.00

This is a history of the so-called 'Communist Left' in British politics from 1914-1945, published by one of the main, contemporary organisations of this tradition and written by one of their sympathisers.

It is a largely accurate account of those identified with the left-wing of Bolshevik politics in this era, a political tendency chastised by Lenin in his famous 'Left-wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder'. Over a long period this tendency gradually struggled towards taking up socialist positions on the nature of the future society, reformism, the state capitalist nature of Russia, China, etc while also developing a virulent hostility to 'bourgeois democracy' and trade unionism. As this pamphlet unwittingly shows, it was a political current which made some serious errors during its political evolution too - and continues to do so, largely because of its adherence to the vanguard politics of Leninism.

The left communists in Britain were small in both number and influence compared to their counterparts in continental Europe, specifically the German, Dutch and Italian lefts. While elements in the Socialist Labour Party and British Socialist Party held views associated with left communism for a short time after the Bolshevik takeover, the most significant left communist organisation in Britain emerged out of the radical suffragette movement led by Sylvia Pankhurst during the First World War and was grouped around the paper *Women's Dreadnought*, which by 1917 had been renamed the *Workers' Dreadnought*.

This became the paper of the Workers' Socialist Federation, a group dominated by Pankhurst and with support drawn from political activists mainly in the East End of London. The WSF never numbered more than about three hundred members at the very most and, after eventually being subsumed within the Communist Party of Great Britain in January 1921, vanished as a group or faction by 1924. Pankhurst had been expelled from the CPGB within a year for her criticism of the official Party line, before moving on to other, more eclectic (and openly reformist) causes. Although Mark Hayes doesn't mention it, what is clear from this and every other related study is that while it would be an exaggeration to say that the *Workers' Dreadnought* group was a one woman show, it would not be that much of an exaggeration. When Pankhurst moved on, the group collapsed and the paper - always owned and largely financed by Pankhurst herself - ceased publication.

Small organisations around the idiosyncratic Glasgow anarchist Guy Aldred such as the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation also came and went in this period, veering between left communism and anarchism, but none of them amounted to much. And that in essence is it: left communism in Britain until its re-appearance with the ICC itself and one or two other tiny groups in the 1970s.

After interesting beginnings, the ICC has mutated into an organisation regarded by virtually all other political groups (including those on the communist left previously well-

disposed towards it) as a paranoid sect, and its treatment of the SPGB here is an interesting one, not least because we are the one workers' political organisation discussed still in existence and thereby the most obvious target for its spleen.

The key 'class frontier' for the ICC and other left communist groups is whether a political organisation takes sides in a capitalist war or not. Yet, despite our impeccable record of actively opposing both world wars and all other wars too, this book gives the SPGB short shrift. It claims, "in practice" that in 1939, just as supposedly in 1914, "the SPGB made no attempt to oppose the war" (p.101). What it means by this is that we did not raise the ICC's suicidal slogan of 'turn the imperialist war into a world wide civil war against capitalism'.

The *Socialist Standard* is criticised for not publishing openly anti-war articles for part of the Second World War because of the strict Defence Regulations relating to seditious printed matter which caused the suppression of the *Daily Worker*, but no mention is made of the Party's open anti-war propaganda by other means or the way in which the SPGB sought to prevent mere pacifist opponents of the war from becoming members. Presumably never having been sent to prison himself for his political beliefs, Mark Hayes also sneers at the SPGB members who applied during the world wars to be conscientious objectors, scores of whom were imprisoned by the British state for refusing to kill their fellow workers.

Quite why the ICC thinks that a few hundred political activists starting a civil war against the might of the capitalist state is a sensible socialist tactic is anyone's guess. The SPGB members who successfully applied to be conscientious objectors or went 'on the run' were at least able to work for socialism and keep the organisation alive, whereas if the ICC was ever crazy enough to put its own tactic into operation it would soon cease to exist organisationally. That the ICC is not really serious about this type of abstract sectarianism though can be seen by the fact that "in practice" (to use its own phrase) there has not been one single occasion when any of its sections across the world has ever tried to do anything other when faced with a war than what the SPGB did in 1914 or 1939, i.e. denounce it as a capitalist conflict not worth the shedding of a drop of blood.

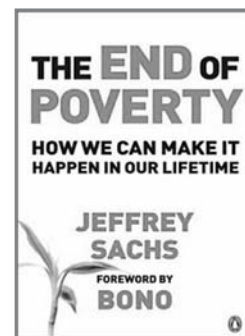
The ICC do exist in something of an unusual - not to say unique - political bubble, as this book repeatedly demonstrates. While the SPGB is lambasted for its insufficient opposition to wars and for betraying the future moneyless commonwealth by opposing the misguided tactics of the Bolsheviks (at least until the early 1920s when the ICC retrospectively thinks this became respectable), the Trotskyists - who then as now took sides in 'national liberation' struggles and wars, were reformist, advocated state capitalism, supported the Labour Party, etc - are regarded with some affection, until they finally 'betrayed' the working class by taking sides in World War Two. For sheer illogicality and inconsistency there can be little to beat this.

When it is filtered for its Leninism and sectarianism, the *British Communist Left* is not all bad as it is a useful historical account in parts. While it is a short book it is nevertheless a bit of a trying read, best characterised as a largely academic piece infused with heavy doses of the ICC's

somewhat tiresome political liturgy. If page after page of references to 'centrism', 'opportunistic currents', the 'proletarian terrain' and 'ambiguous swamps' are your thing then go out and buy it immediately. It's not too unkind to say you are unlikely to be killed in the rush.

DAP

Jeffrey Sachs: The End of Poverty: How We Can Make It Happen in Our Lifetime. Penguin £7.99.



There are various things wrong with this book, the first being the title. Sachs (described on the back cover as 'probably the most important economist in the world') is not concerned with doing away with sink estates where

children do not get one square meal a day, let alone three, or the culture of pawn shops and loan sharks (which would be classified as relative poverty). Instead he is writing about eliminating absolute or extreme poverty, where households cannot meet basic needs: people are chronically hungry, have no access to health care or safe water, and may lack rudimentary shelter. In 2001, around 1.1 billion of the earth's population were in extreme poverty. Sachs neatly places things in perspective:

"Almost three thousand people died needlessly and tragically at the World Trade Center on September 11; ten thousand Africans die needlessly and tragically every single day - and have died every single day since September 11 - of AIDS, TB, and malaria."

But even if his proposals were implemented and proved successful, there would still be plenty of poverty in the world.

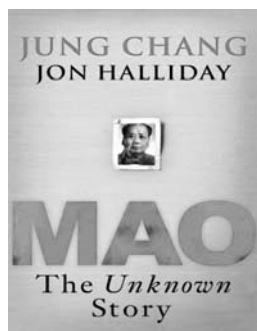
Ending extreme poverty would of course be very worthwhile, but can capitalism achieve this? Sachs claims that the number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen from 1.5 billion since 1981 (largely due to developments in China). Surely, however, we are entitled to be a little sceptical about such claims: they are based on World Bank estimates, and ignore the extent of poverty still found in China, especially in the countryside. He acknowledges, though, that the extreme poor in Africa have more than doubled in the twenty years to 2001, now being over 300 million, which is a rise even in percentage terms. Yet, he argues, extreme poverty can be got rid of by 2025: the key is 'to enable the poorest of the poor to get their foot on the ladder of development.' The way to kick-start things is by comparatively modest amounts of overseas aid, which will mean that households can save more and so increase the amount of seeds and agricultural equipment they have access to and will also allow governments to build roads, sanitation systems and so on; this will snowball and lead on to further development. The first few chapters of the book imply that Sachs has some kind of economic magic wand that he can wave over countries from Bolivia to

India, delivering prosperity.

However, his proposals for 'ending poverty' are effectively put forward in a vacuum, unencumbered by the existence of a world dominated by one super-powerful nation, a small number of super-powerful companies, and a tiny minority of super-rich capitalists. Sachs accepts that exploitation of poor countries by the rich has happened in the past, but believes that it no longer applies. He also accepts, though without making it explicit of course, a division of the world into owners of the means of production and non-owners. Doing away with this would mean an immediate end to all kinds of poverty - extreme, moderate and relative - without having to wait another twenty years and rely on yet more empty promises.

PB

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday: Mao: the Untold Story. Jonathon Cape £25.



Overtuning a paragraph of conventional history can be the basis for an entire thesis, if not an entire professional reputation. Chang and Halliday have set out to re-write every paragraph of the story of Mao Zedong.

The authors attack the established canon of Mao biography; and their clear, unrelenting hostility may house the book's greatest weakness. Much of their re-interpretation depends upon assessments of Mao's character, and his internal states when he made vital decisions. For example, they maintain that Mao deliberately meandered along the Long March (a period of retreat by the Red Army from the nationalists) in order to strengthen his grip on the party before they met up with the rest of the army.

Repeatedly they make reference to what Mao was thinking, which, without written sources, is impossible to determine. Most historians and biographers would hedge and say 'maybe' or 'probably' he thought something.

Such potential weakness, although they may allow latter-day Maoist wingnuts to deflect debate away from the issues raised, aren't fatal. The book describes in aching detail the horrors of Mao's regime, facts established by witnesses and irrefutable evidence. This is largely because, unlike Hitler or Stalin, Mao's preference was not for disappearances and quiet murder, but for public witch-hunts - mobilised terror in which anyone refusing to wholeheartedly join in would find themselves a target. He repeatedly used this strategy throughout his career to gain and hold power, culminating in the infamous Cultural Revolution, which accounted for some 100 million people being humiliated, tortured, maimed and, in 3 million instances, murdered.

His callousness is almost beyond the scope of human imagining. In one year, 22 million people died of starvation - brought about primarily through Mao's disastrous project to make China - then one of the



Jung Chang

poorest countries on Earth - into a nuclear super-power. The famines and overwork induced by the programme led to 38 million deaths.

The authors maintain Mao was essentially apolitical: merely egotistic and power hungry. They reject claims that he cared about peasants - producing a quote in which he maintains that the lot of students (like himself) was worse than that of the peasants. They suggest his choice of the communist party over the nationalists (for a time the two parties were united) was simply down to a predilection for violence.

He had many homes built for himself - at great expense - which he would only set foot in once - if ever. While people starved he would gorge himself on whole chickens and huge quantities of meat and fish. Around him, millions of Chinese had less food than labourers in Auschwitz.

His reputation for supporting feminism also takes a battering in this book, as the authors reveal how he used women almost as imperial concubines, procured from the local labour force. Anyone who objected to his and other leaders' privileges amongst squalor were derided as "petit-bourgeois egalitarians".

Chang and Halliday even attempt to overturn the central story of the Mao myth - the war of national liberation against Japan. Even very recent writers hedge criticisms of Mao by mention of the vicissitudes of that war. However, this book alleges that the Reds under Mao were more concentrated on fighting the nationalist government than the Japanese.

Further, they try to show that on the Long March, Mao and the other leaders didn't march with their soldiers: they were carried; that the leader of the nationalists, Chiang Kai-Shek allowed the Red Army to escape because his son was being held hostage by Stalin; and that some of Mao's major victories may have been assisted by the treachery of the nationalist general who repeatedly allowed troops to walk into horrific ambushes.

The narrative makes out that Mao never commanded much support with either the Chinese communist party or the population. His ascent was largely down to the backing of Russian communist officials who never met him.

This book is unlikely to be the last word on the matter, but it is a forceful reappraisal of a figure who would be the equivalent of a George Washington for the emerging Chinese superpower. This is the story of what happened when a ruthless tyrant tried to rule a quarter of the human race.

The only positive message is that ultimately, his terror proved futile, as he increasingly found himself having to horse trade policies to stay in power against his rivals - leaders are prisoners of their followers. The terror of Mao's rule could well be seen as the impotent rage of a tyrant.

PS

Film Review

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff



To describe a society of common ownership without mentioning the word socialism is undoubtedly difficult. But by no means impossible. For a short film produced by members of the

Socialist Party, *Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff*, does just that in a language that nevertheless consistently pulls no punches.

Socialists are well aware of the dual purpose on the part of the capitalist media in portraying the class of exploited producers as a mindless, selfish, non-caring mass of individual consumers: to promote profits and create disunity. The film destroys these caricatures right from the start and exposes them for the claptrap they are, by juxtaposing the individual differences of perception with the broad facts of social evolution, human behaviour, and the unique ability of humans to care and share in common despite our cultural differences and lifestyles.

When the producing class engage in widespread discrimination over issues of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, disability, etc; and take sides over who gets what share of the global market, this is clearly against their interests since they are thereby helping to create the conditions for a wealthy few to control the means of living.

Globally the results are all too familiar with the complexity of private property relationships concealed within a quagmire of disputes over territory and markets, followed by constant eruptions of violent conflict, and ending in misery and destitution on a massive scale. By skilfully crafting the reasons for this complexity of private property relationships to a novel 'kids stuff' analogy the script neatly underlines the importance of gaining a worldview of capitalism by analysing how the rules governing the minority ownership of the 'toys' determines the terms of oppression and the conditions of inequality for the 'toyless producers'.

Although there is an obvious danger such an analogy could be counter-productive, by unintentionally projecting an oversimplification of what constitutes the reality of capitalism, this hurdle is overcome by complementing the linkage to the "reality" of capitalism with a powerful backdrop of words and images, so the overall context underscores a revolutionary outlook on how we might live. These contrasts are further enhanced by comparing the divisions and horrors of capitalism with a society where production is geared to meeting human needs not profit - plus the immense benefits to be gained when the world's resources are distributed through a system of production for use and free access - so the necessity of social equality become conclusive.

This is maintained throughout the 50 minutes so the viewer is left in no doubt that

before a world of common ownership is possible the majority have to gain a level of class consciousness and political understanding. In other words: engaging in a struggle to promote the class interest of the majority to attain and create a society where private property is replaced by common ownership involves acknowledging that the present unequal access to the means of living requires a political solution.

To get this solution across to an apolitical audience successfully in itself is no mean feat, but to also focus attention on the vast amount of social and individual freedom such a revolution will bring about will motivate many viewers to press the replay button over and over again, and so speaks volumes for the professional dedication and attention to detail. Although this is a first in terms of the socialist message being transposed into a film format no doubt it will not be the last. So watch this space, but in the meantime judge for yourself by watching *Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff* at www.socialist-tv.com, or alternatively by purchasing a DVD from: Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN. Cost £5 (including post & packaging).

Brian Johnson

from page 5

best to stop the sale of bogus 'official' kit, so the Olympic 'movement' says that only companies who stump up the money to them can gain any kudos from the magic O-word and the five rings.

Naturally money has long been talking the Olympic language with regard to the 2008 games in Beijing. Three levels of corporate involvement are envisaged, including partners (cost \$40 million), and sponsors (over \$20 million). Budweiser, for instance, is the official international beer sponsor, giving its owners Anheuser-Busch the right to use the 2008 games logo for promotional purposes in China and many other countries. And it's not just a matter of getting money in for 2008. In the words of one marketing expert, 'The Beijing Olympics will not be about sport, it will be about creating a superbrand called "China"' (<http://www.chinabusinessreview.com/public/0501/ogilvy.html>). So as China flexes its muscles in terms of currency revaluations and provides financial support for Mugabe's thuggish regime in Zimbabwe, it also competes in staging the Olympic free-for-all and marketing itself within world capitalism. ■

PB

Meetings

Manchester Branch Meeting

Monday 26 September, 8 pm
Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City centre
'FEEDING THE WORLD'

West London Branch

Tuesday 20 September, 8 pm

Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W.4 (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

Showing of video **ARE YOU IN A BAD STATE?**

Fifty Years Ago

TALKS AT THE SUMMIT

The snows of the Cold war are melting. The Soviet Premier, Bulganin, and the Communist Party leader, Krushchev, are to visit Britain next spring. They will be feted by the Queen. Even the *Daily Mail* welcomes the visit - with some reservations.

During the war the Russians were our friends, our "gallant allies," our "comrades in arms." But since 1945 they have become the villains of the piece. They have become our potential enemies. Whilst our old enemies the Italians, the Japanese and the Germans (the Western Germans, of course!) are now our friends, our allies in a possible future war. But now, since the Geneva "Talks at the Summit" the Russians - for how long we know not - are almost our

friends again; or at least our politicians have "agreed" to differ with the Soviet rulers.

To most people, who think that all these differences and antagonisms are due to differences of systems or ideologies - to "Communism" or "Fascism" - these changes are quite bewildering.

(. . .) [T]he reasons why the rulers of Russia, America, or Britain fall out is not any so-called difference of ideologies, of Democracy, or Communism; or differences of social systems or ways of life. For we know that their social systems are not basically different; that American "free enterprise" is not fundamentally different from Soviet "Communism." We know that in Britain, America - and the U.S.S.R. the same problems exist; we know that the workers of these lands are poor, that they live insecure lives, whilst

their employers are rich; we know that in the Soviet Union, as Stalin admitted just before he died, the ruling class is being forced more and more to look for markets for its goods - outside its own frontiers. We know that the Soviet leaders are as much concerned with protecting their property interests as are the Americans or British. That is why we are not surprised at the antagonisms the Cold War, the changing alliances, the "Talks at the Summit," and the temporary patching-up of differences.

(From an article by Peter E. Newell, *Socialist Standard*, September 1955)



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Paul Foot and the vote

Paul Foot who died last year was always a readable journalist. He was also a member of the Trotskyist SWP. When he died he was working on a book about the

vote, a curious subject, it might be thought, for the political testament of a member of an organisation which favours armed insurrection and mass strikes rather than the vote as the way to gain control of political power. Called *The Vote, How it was Won and How it was Undermined*, it is basically about the tension between Democracy (as universal suffrage) and Property (as accumulated wealth).

During the English civil war a famous debate, presided over by Cromwell, took place in the church at Putney, in London, where the issue was thrashed out amongst representatives of all ranks in the parliamentary army, of the ordinary soldiers as well as of the officers and the high command. Soldiers who were Levellers argued that the vote should be given to every man (or at least to every man who was not a servant or on the Poor Law; there was some ambiguity on this point). They were opposed by Commissary-General Ireton, Cromwell's son-in-law, who argued that only those who had a real stake in the country by virtue of being owners of land should have the right to vote, i.e. to decide what laws were made, what taxes were levied, etc. It fell to an officer with the appropriate name of Colonel Rich to spell out what might happen if men with little or no property were given the vote:

"It may happen, that the majority may by law, not in confusion, destroy property; there may be a law enacted, that there shall be equality of goods and estate".

This remained the standard argument against democracy until the end of the 19th century. Both Gladstone and Disraeli were declared opponents of democracy, and in fact in Europe democracy was seen, by both its opponents and supporters as a

some, in fact most, of this work would have to be done by persons who were neither aristocrats nor capitalists. The working class had to be got involved in the administration of capitalism. To do this they had to be brought "within the constitution" by being given full citizenship rights, as represented by having the vote. The more far-seeing of the supporters of capitalism realised this; some actively campaigned for it even in Chartist times. The bourgeois-democratic republic (or constitutional monarchy) is in fact the ideal political form for the rule of the capitalist class.

However, just because universal suffrage and formal democratic control of the machinery of government was in the overall interest of the capitalist class as a whole didn't mean that this was going to come about automatically. As Foot points out, it had to be struggled for. Both the First Reform Act of 1832 (which extended the franchise to the "middle class") and the Second Reform Act (which extended it to most urban workers) were accompanied by riots and demonstrations by workers that persuaded the House of Lords not to use its veto. In between, as Foot recounts, the Chartists demonstrated and rioted and even staged some armed uprisings to try to achieve universal male suffrage, unsuccessfully as it turned out, but with the aim of transferring political power to the working class.

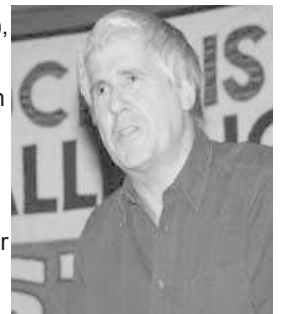
When it comes to the second part of the book ("how the vote was undermined"), Foot seems to be suggesting that Labour failed because its leaders, when in government, weren't determined enough in their use of parliament to bring about, in the words of the Labour Party's manifesto for the 1974 general election manifesto, "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power in favour of working people and their families" (yes, believe it or not, that what's they actually were promising as recently as that). This, despite the fact that his own descriptions of what happened to the various Labour governments - "bankers' ramp" in 1931, "sterling crises" in 1947 and 1949, "gnomes of Zurich" for Wilson in the 1960s, and "IMF conditions" for Callaghan in the 1970s - bring out the fact that capitalism is a world system and that no government of one country, however determined, can isolate the economy from the workings and pressures of the world market.

It might be thought that Foot as a Trotskyist (he was in the SWP) would have realised that "socialism in one country" is impossible. But, although Trotsky did proclaim this, it didn't mean that he thought nothing could be done in one country; if a vanguard was ruthless and determined enough it could, he argued, establish a "Workers State", based on nationalisation and planning, i.e. that "state capitalism in one country" was possible.

It is what had happened in Russia and Foot gives the impression that the Labour Party could have done the same in Britain if only its leaders had been prepared to stand up to the gnomes of Zurich and other international capitalists. Actually, as a Trotskyist, Foot doesn't believe this, as it is the Trotskyist view that the sort of full-scale state capitalism that Foot thinks the Labour Party should have been bold enough to have pressed on towards can only be established after a successful armed insurrection led by a Trotskyist vanguard ("There is no parliamentary road", says "What the SWP Stands For"). It is thus rather odd that Foot should have chosen to write a book about *The Vote* at all since for him the vote is only of relatively minor significance, serving merely as a potential means of access to a tribunal from which to spread Trotskyist views ("At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system").

This is quite a different perspective to that of the more clear-sighted Chartists - and Marx who was influenced by them - that universal suffrage, once achieved, could be used as a means of winning control of political power so that, in the words of Colonel Rich in 1647, "the majority may by law, not in confusion, destroy property". ■

ALB



Voting with its Foot - the SWP never had much time for democracy

Chartist meeting, Kennington, 1848

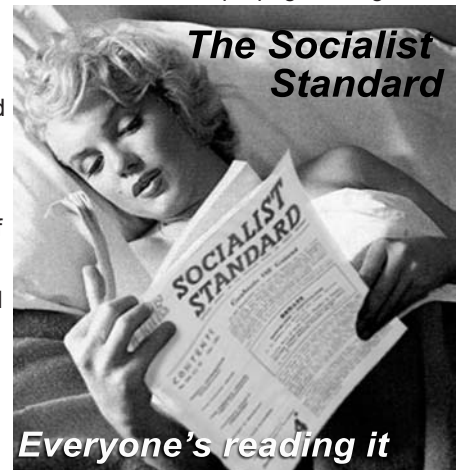


revolutionary demand. Marx himself hoped that, with the universal male suffrage that the Chartists demanded, what Colonel Rich had feared would come about. "Universal suffrage is the equivalent of political power for the working class of England", he wrote in August 1852 in an article in the New York Tribune quoted by Foot. "Its inevitable result, here, is the political supremacy of the working class".

After the Second and Third Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, the majority of electors in Britain came from the working class, even though only about 30 percent of the adult population had the vote (no women and only 60 percent of men). This remained the situation until after the first world war, when the vote was extended to men over 21 and women over 30. Universal suffrage did not come until 1928 when the vote was given to women too at 21.

The extension of the vote did partially realise Colonel Rich's fear and Karl Marx's hope in that it did lead to the formation and rise of the Labour Party as a "working class party" with as one of its aims a redistribution of wealth from the rich to the working class. But this didn't happen. The second part of Foot's book is devoted to explaining why Democracy did not lead to any significant inroads into the rights of Property, in other words, why Labour failed.

One thing he had neglected in his account of "how the vote was won" was the extent to which an extension of the vote increasingly became a necessity as capitalism developed and as the administrative work of the capitalist state, at local as well as national level, grew and became more complex. It was clear that



Everyone's reading it



Keep It In The Family

The Make Poverty History movement has been taken seriously by at least one member of the African capitalist class.

"Most of his country's citizens survive on less than 60p a day, but that has not stopped the son of the President of Equatorial Guinea spending nearly £1 million on three luxury cars during a massive shopping spree in South Africa.

Teodorin Nguema Obiang, the Minister of Forestry, Environment and Housing in his Father's Government, bought a black Bentley Arnage and a cream Bentley Mulliner worth £600,000 last weekend.



Bentley Arnage interior, just so you know

He then added a white six-litre Lamborghini worth £275,000 to his new fleet, according to The Star newspaper." The Times (21 July). Mr Obiang's family have made poverty history - for their family at any rate. But what about the working class in that country - 60p a day? We might earn about £60 a day but the capitalist class in Britain enjoy the same class differences. How many of you spend a million pounds on a shopping spree?

An Honest Ambassador

President Bush took the unprecedented step of appointing the US Ambassador to the UN John Bolton during a recess of the US Senate. He deemed this necessary because of an opposition easy to understand when you consider Bolton's



Rambo Bolton telling it like it is

contempt for the UN. "In 1994, during a convention in New York, Mr Bolton declared: 'There is no such thing as

the United Nations. There is an international community that occasionally can be led by the only real power left in the world, and that's the United States, when it suits our interests and who can get others to go along.'" He also said:

"The only question for the United States is what's in our interest. And if you don't like that, I'm sorry, but that is a fact." The Times (2 August)

There is nothing remarkable about this. It correctly sums up the US position in world politics, but what the Senate object to is the honesty with which they are expressed. Politicians are never fond of honesty, it sets a dangerous precedent!

Wage Slaves

A common objection to socialism is that people are too lazy and

wouldn't work thus making socialism impossible. This "lazy man" objection to a new society doesn't seem to square with the findings of a report prepared by the office supplier Esselte. "Nearly a third of British wage slaves work more than 50 hours a week; 4 per cent more than 70 hours; and more than a third take work home according to a survey of 2,611 people." The Times (4 August)

Good News From Uganda

Amidst all the despair about world poverty we have managed to discover from the letter page of an African newspaper some good news. "About two thirds of the world's population are hungry, while millions die from starvation every year. Why in a world of potential plenty, is so elementary a human need as food neglected? ... The law that governs everywhere is "no profit, no production". Uganda Observer (4 August) Yes, even in so-called backward Africa, workers are learning that capitalism causes poverty.

A Bleak Future

Despite the well-meaning activities of the Make Poverty History campaign and various promises from G8 the future looks grim for the poor in Africa. "The proportion of malnourished people in sub-Sahara

Africa has remained at about 35% since 1970, the International Food Policy Research Institute said. But population growth means the number affected rose to 200 million by 2001. ... It warns that the number of malnourished children could grow from 38.6 million now to 41.9 million by 2025." BBC News (12 August) Well meaning charities are not the answer to this horrendous social problem. As the socialist letter writer to the Uganda Observer noted "the law that governs everywhere is no profit no production".

What is your view?

We are socialists and obviously we detest a society where people are forced to lie and cheat in order to survive, but what about successful liars and cheaters who have done well inside capitalism? Here is the PR Guru Max Clifford who has made millions lying and cheating. "Do I say, No, my client isn't gay when I know that he is? Of course. Does telling the truth matter? If it's showbiz...rock'n'roll ... then absolutely not." The Times (16 August) It isn't just show business though, here is Sir Harvey Jones a former chief executive of ICI commenting on modern capitalism - "Business is getting more corrupt. It is less a calling, less a profession. The stock market ... has purely become a gambling den. The Times (15 August) These people have benefited from capitalism and yet can see how corrupt it is. You haven't benefited at all, so why do you support it?



see page 17 for details

Free lunch

by Rigg



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Socialist Standard

Gulf Coast Hurricane
Japan Atom Bombings II
Gate Gourmet
Gypsies: a Problem?
Islam and Socialism

October 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1214 £1

Capitalism's Wash Out

Katrina blows the lid off caring America





Bush and Katrina victims, pages 6-8



Sold out? Gate Gourmet, page 13



A radical read? The Koran, page 15

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The Socialist Party of Great Britain

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on Saturday 1st October at the address below.
Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary.
All articles, letters and notice should be sent to the editorial committee at: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High street, London SW4 7UN.
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"Calling the action illegal has a significant symbolic and ideological role in giving the impression that striking is criminal and by extension wicked."

Gate Gourmet - Another Union Sell-Out? page 6

Time to Move On

As the Berlin Wall fell and the Kremlin's Empire collapsed in Eastern Europe, Western leaders spoke about a "peace dividend" and how money previously spent on arms would be re-channelled into social programmes; redirected towards the fight against poverty, inequality and ignorance. Some spoke about "the end of history", how capitalism was at last triumphant. Capitalism, at the dawn of a new millennium, had supposedly seen off its rivals and now, left to develop, would bring prosperity to all.

In reality:

- World military spending for 2005: \$1 trillion (or just over \$31,709 per second)
- Number of billionaires in the world: 691
- Number of people malnourished: approx 815 million
- 1 billion people lack access to clean water
- 2.4 billion people lack access to decent sanitation
- 17,280 children die every day from hunger

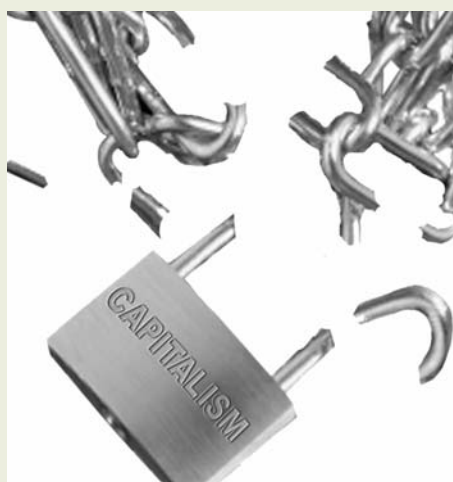
According to the most recent UN Human Development Report:

- 54 countries are now poorer than they were in 1990, which is when world leaders

made their "peace dividend" claim.

The world's 225 richest individuals, of whom 60 are Americans with total assets of \$311 billion, have a combined wealth of over \$1 trillion - equal to the annual income of the poorest 47 percent of the entire world's population.

- The estimated additional cost of maintaining universal access to basic education, basic health care, reproductive health care, adequate food and clean water and safe sewers for all is roughly \$40 billion a year, or less than 4 percent of the combined wealth of the 225 richest people in the world.



Really moving on: breaking free of the fetters

- The richest fifth of the world's people consumes 86 percent of all goods and services while the poorest fifth consumes just 1.3 percent.

- The United Nations Children's Fund reported in 2005 that one billion children, or half of the world's population of children, suffer from poverty, violent conflict and the scourge of AIDS.

Capitalism may well have advanced the scientific and technological capabilities of humanity to a stage where we can now feasibly establish a world of abundance, a world without waste or want or war. But the facts speak for themselves. There are now more starving, thirsty, homeless and unemployed people on the planet than at any time in human history. Rather than providing for the needs of the world's people, Capitalism stands as a fetter to the full and improved use of the world's productive resources in the service of humanity.

Capitalism need not be the end of history. It is just one station along the railway line of human social development at which we are presently standing. We can move on, progress. By progress, what we mean is socialism, a society based on common ownership, democratic control and production solely for use. Real change is possible, but only if enough of us really do want to move further along the track to where real human history begins.

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Science, socialism and the animal question

inclined to reasoned, evidence-based thinking, tend by and large to support the scientists' point of view, for example in their bitter feud with 'intelligent design' advocates, or in their massive protest against the Bush administration's deliberate distortion of scientific studies for political ends, or in their efforts to overcome religious bigotry which prevents effective vaccination against killer diseases. Sometimes, amid the raving mullahs, the ranting politicians and the grubby interest-groups, the voice of the scientific community can sound like the only quiet note of sanity in the screaming choirs of hell.

There are times, though, when even some scientists start to sound a little reactionary, self-righteous and sanctimonious on their own account. One such instance is the issue of animal rights. Last month the New York Stock Exchange backed out of its agreement to float Life Sciences Research, the struggling US parent of Huntingdon Life Sciences in Cambridgeshire, with just 45 minutes to go before trading began. No reason was given, but media pundits and insiders were unanimous that the NYSE pulled out because of animal rights pressure. Scientists were duly aghast, and cries of 'Shame!' echoed round the research laboratories. Leader columns in the scientific press expressed serious concern at how important research was once again being hampered by wild-eyed ideologues without a science GCSE or a bath between them.

But do the scientists have any right to such a moral high ground? It's true that HLS staff have received relentless harassment including violence and threats against themselves and their families, but the egregious and quasi-terrorist tactics adopted by some animal liberationists do not in turn justify wholesale uncritical support for animal research. Scientists tend to be very defensive about animal research, but their arguments, that such research is always necessary, tightly controlled, responsible and largely painless, are at best questionable and sometimes plain wrong, depending as they do on an idealized representation of scientific research as it is supposed to be, and not as it actually exists in the buck-hungry world of capitalist corporations.

To be fair, animal rights activists can propagate myths about research which confuse the issue (for a list, see <http://www.rds-online.org.uk>). However, scientists do not help their own case with simplistic no-brainer dilemmas like 'your dog, or your son', which imply that all testing is for the common good and which gloss over the large proportion of experiments done for cosmetics, food colourings, weedkillers and other non-health-related products. While scientists protest loudly, and rightly, against violent intimidation by activists, they are more likely to shrug mildly at undercover reports of 'exceptional' or 'aberrational' behaviour among

Scientists don't always find it easy to get on with the public. Aside from the abstruse and technical nature of their work, which inevitably creates a natural comprehension gap, there are political, religious and ideological factors which all too often cause rifts between science and the general public.

Socialists, being

HLS staff, including videos of them punching and kicking animals for amusement, and falsifying test reports. Nor are they impressed with references to animal testing's long list of heroic failures, including thalidomide and, more recently, seroxat. How many more disasters would we have had without animal testing, they ask, knowing there is no answer. 4000 drugs are undergoing animal testing in Britain today, of which only ten percent will come to market, but scientists who point to this as a sign of the importance of testing do not concern themselves with the fact that many of these drugs are not new treatments but reverse-engineered old drugs designed to get round product patents.

So what would a socialist society's attitude to animal testing be? In a word, pragmatic. Without being bogged down with imponderable questions of natural animal 'rights', socialist science would (if it decided to do so at all) conduct animal research only under conditions of strict and peer-assessed necessity, and with attendant informed public debate, two key factors notable for their general absence today. Much of the pharmaceutical industry would be obsolete or transformed anyway if one can assume, after capitalism, a dramatic fall in heart disease and obesity, two wealth-related conditions for which the present drug market is principally geared, and an even more dramatic fall in poverty and stress-related diseases which presently do not even merit scientific attention. While 'product' safety would be paramount, and might conceivably require some animal testing, there would be no need to duplicate the testing for twenty different competing brands, as happens now. Nor, in the absence of private ownership of information, would producers deliberately avoid established and tested products because of licence restrictions, or because, in the public domain, they were unpatentable and therefore could never yield a profit.

Socialists are not unduly sentimental about animals, and consider that a human's first loyalty should be their own species. Nevertheless, the degree to which human society is 'civilised' can reasonably be gauged by its treatment of animals and the natural world as well as by its treatment of humans, and socialism, in its abolition of all aspects of the appalling savagery of capitalism, will undoubtedly do its part to abolish all unnecessary suffering by non-human sentient creatures.



More on E-Democracy

In case regular readers suspect Pathfinders of a too uncritical enthusiasm where new communications technology is concerned, here is an example where our enthusiasm is somewhat more muted. With e-democracy projects blossoming everywhere, the interactive approach to government is developing beyond merely doing your tax returns. Now the Scottish Parliament is running an e-petitioning system, where citizens can raise issues and complaints online, the progress of the petition then being fed back to the petitions website for public monitoring (BBC Online Technology, Sept 19).

The idea came from Professor Ann McIntosh, of Napier University, who set the system up with the help of BT and has been running it for a year. "We wanted to show that technology can do a lot more than just support e-voting. It can actually allow participation in decision making," she says, enthusiastically. Socialists would agree, with one simple proviso: that comms technology be first employed in abolishing capitalism. Then we'd see some real public participation in decision making. As it is, electronic petitioning is likely to be treated the same way as paper petitions, except now it can be ignored - electronically.



Self-Determination

Dear Editors,

The last two decades have witnessed an increasing number of anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation movements seeking a voice through protest and opposition to the damaging practices of trans-national corporations and the World Bank, IMF and WTO. The probability is that the vast majority of these individuals have never studied economics or politics and don't understand much of the workings of current economic policies, but they certainly do see and feel the results and negative effects of these policies and they have a feel for what is unjust. They share a common desire for a better world, a fairer world. They may not have identified clearly or explicitly what it is they want in this other, better world, but they have undoubtedly recognised much of what they don't want. Their protests and their slogans are demands to be heard; these are ways of expressing anger, frustration and disagreement with the status quo.

Around the world such groups are voicing many different grievances from many different angles. Bolivians grabbing their water rights back from Bechtel, who are now suing the Bolivian government for compensation for what they would have earned in the future. Hundreds of thousands of Indians being forced off their fertile productive farmland in favour of huge dams which promise fat profits for fat cats. Millions of AIDs sufferers denied access to life-giving treatments for lack of cash. Empathisers in the minority world protesting against the methods and results of worldwide capitalist business.

So many different reasons from so many different perspectives; different stages of anger, deprivation, disenfranchisement. It would be unrealistic to make broad generalisations about the myriad individual goals but it's certainly possible to gather the separate bits and pieces together and view them as discrete perspectives with converging aims. All these fingers may not be poised over exactly the right button but at least they are scrabbling in the right area. Surely, better *something* rather than sitting in a darkened room absorbing more mind-numbing images from another evening's bombardment courtesy of the capitalist media?

It's about choices. People's first choice should be socialism. It seems such a small step from the examples given here, but a huge paradigm shift. For people focused on life's necessities - enough food for the family everyday, somewhere safe to sleep, healthcare and childcare for increasing numbers of chronically ill, a job this month, next year that will pay the bills - it's hard to focus on the light at the end when the tunnel is long and dark. So, as socialists, how do we address this last little push, this yawning gap? Let's not criticise those who haven't figured it out yet. Let's harness their strengths and energies. We need first to get people to see the light, recognize it for what it is and then to keep focused on heading for it through the long dark tunnel of capitalism, in growing numbers, with growing strength in the knowledge that there is a better world, a fairer world, a socialist world.

JANET SURMAN, Turkey.

Marx in Error?

Dear Editors,

I note that you, in the September issue, favourably quote part of Marx's sixth Thesis on Ludwig Feuerbach:

"Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations".

I would like to point out that Marx was in error on this point, and that in fact Feuerbach did not abstract from social relations. Here is the man himself:

"The natural viewpoint of man, the viewpoint of the distinction between I and thou, subject and object, is the true and absolute viewpoint; consequently, it is also the viewpoint of philosophy. The single man for himself possesses the essence of man neither in himself as a moral being nor in himself as a thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in the community and unity of man with man; it is a unity, however, which rests only on the reality of the distinction between I and thou. Solitude is finiteness and limitation; community is freedom and infinity. Man for himself is man (in the ordinary sense); man with man - the unity of I and thou - is God" (*Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (1844), p 70-71)

A bit fluffy and abstract perhaps, but it is clear, just as it is clear in his *Essence of Christianity*, that his analysis was based upon social relations.

R. CUMMING (by email)

What "Marxist Terrorists"?

Below is a letter sent to Colombian Ambassador to Britain.

Mr Ambassador,

Following on the return to Ireland of the three Irish republicans convicted of assisting the FARC nationalist movement in Colombia, your Vice President, Mr Francisco Santos, is reported in the British and Irish media as saying that the men in question were training 'Marxist terrorists'.

If Mr Santos has some authoritative knowledge of Karl Marx and his political and economic philosophy that knowledge would necessarily have come from the abundant and easily-available writings of Marx or his friend and co-worker, Frederick Engels.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain since its establishment in 1904 has become the repository of genuine Marxist thought in this country and bases its political practice on the basic tenets of Marxism. We affirm that Marx's vision of socialism - or communism, for he used the terms interchangeably - was a wageless, classless, moneyless and stateless, world wherein the machinery of production and the resources of nature would be owned in common by humanity and wherein the state as an apparatus of government over people would give way to a simple administration of things.

As Marx made clear, the very nature of his conception of socialism precluded any form of minority violence; socialism would necessarily have to be established by the conscious, democratic action of the

working class - the producers of all real wealth - and be maintained by the most wide-ranging forms of participative democracy.

If Mr Santos had applied himself to a study of Marx's writings he must surely have noticed that, rather than advocating terrorism, Marx devoted much of his time and energy to repudiating the views of those who urged terrorism on the working class as a means of resolving any facet of its exploitation.

In the present climate of fear engendered by the brutal sectional and conflicting interests of capitalism, Mr Santos' statement is irresponsible in that it exposes genuine Marxists to the threat of violence from many quarters. Indeed, one can only wonder at the possible fate of someone in Columbia thinking he or she had a democratic right to advocate the principles of Marxism.

Since we are not in a position to challenge Mr Santos directly we would ask you as a matter of urgency for clarification of his remarks specifically in relation to the suggestion that Marxism is in any way compatible with the idea of terrorism.

John Bissett, General Secretary.

The following reply was received:

Dear Mr. Bissett,

Thank you for your letter of 10 August regarding certain reported statements by Colombian Vice President Mr. Francisco Santos following the return to Ireland of the three Irish republicans convicted of assisting the FARC in Colombia. Your letter has been forwarded to the Vice President.

ALFONSO LÓPEZ CABELLERO, AMBASSADOR.

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DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

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Katrina - Not Just an Ill Wind



Driving along the freeways abutting on the Gulf of Mexico it comes as a shock to see so many signs announcing that you are travelling a designated evacuation route. For this is a part of America which is well accustomed to the extremes of stormy weather. But Hurricane Katrina was something utterly out of the ordinary. We are still digesting the accounts of the horrors endured by people who were caught in the path of the hurricane and of their suffering since then. What lives they had have been wrecked; what possessions they relied on have disappeared into the floods with the corpses, the rubbish and the sewage; what they saw as their future has been literally blown away. So far there has been no reliable estimate of the loss of life: does it run into hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands? For those who worry themselves about such issues there has been no informed guess of how much the disaster will cost the insurance companies; Merrill Lynch, who know a thing or two about pushing money around, have come up with the figure of \$22 billion. And George Bush, who could once luxuriate behind apparently unassailable ramparts of support, has had to contemplate the erosion of his popularity.

In its destructive power and the misery it unleashed against the people of the Gulf States, Katrina was extraordinary. But in some important respects it was completely normal and predictable. To begin with there was the stampede of politicians - in particular George Bush - to avoid any responsibility for the catastrophe and for the official failure to rush help to the victims. Apart from the damage to roads, buildings and the like, the hurricane's breach of the levees protecting New Orleans was crucial. Bush told a TV reporter that "I don't think anyone anticipated the breach of the levees" but that was simply untrue. *Business Week* newspaper, for example, thought differently: "Engineers have known for years that New Orleans's levees couldn't withstand anything above a category 3 hurricane" (Katrina was category 5). In fact as recently as 1998 the category 2 hurricane George forced the water levels up to a foot below the top of the levees. In 2002 a local New Orleans newspaper concluded from its investigation that a major hurricane would devastate the region.

Money

Anticipation of the breach should have led to the levees being heightened and strengthened, saving a lot of lives and preventing untold misery for the people. But before Katrina arrived on the scene the funding which could have improved the levees was cut by \$71 million; a previous Secretary of Environmental Quality in Louisiana was angry enough about this to forecast that "a disastrous flood was inevitable". One local emergency management chief thought that the cuts were imposed because "It appears that the money has been moved in the president's budget to handle homeland security and the war in Iraq and I suppose that's the price we pay". He might have put it differently - for capitalism killing

people is more affordable than protecting them from harm.

So what of the people who lived in the path of the storm, of the wind and the flood and whose lives were to be so dramatically affected by decisions on where money was to be spent? In the vast majority they were black and in the lower reaches of poverty. In New Orleans two thirds of the population was African/American, with a quarter of them officially graded as living in poverty. In the Lower Ninth Ward of that city, which suffered particularly badly in the flood, 90 percent were African/American with almost a third of them classified as living in poverty. In a flash of candour which must have caused acute anguish to her minders Barbara Bush, the mother of George Bush and the wife of the former president, shared her thoughts about this: "So many of the people in the area here, you know, were underprivileged anyway. So this [fleeing from the hurricane, from the floods, the fear, the death, then living in the squalor of emergency accommodation] is working well for them"

Poverty

Typically, the people living at or below the poverty line endure bad housing without proper plumbing, hot and cold water, a shower or a bath. It also means that, crucially in America, they could not afford a car or any other ready means of carrying out the official advice to evacuate the area before Katrina arrived - and that if they did manage to flee they would have no access to ready places of refuge. It seems obvious that such people should help themselves from damaged shops and stores, putting survival before capitalism's property laws. They would not have been deterred to be told that this was looting, a very serious crime; nor would they have been impressed by Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's apparent condoning of the same type of activity, when it suited him, in the case of Iraq: "Freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things". Perhaps Katrina had informed the looters that to be poor can be to suffer a desperately inadequate life style with miserable prospects and that the poorer you are the worse this is.

Katrina was a disaster of epic scale for the poor of the Gulf States, fleeing the winds and the waters, or cowering in some noxious shelter. There was some bad news also for the other side of the class divide. The firm Deloitte, who are called "consultants" (which does not mean they are readily available to give advice to anyone trying to get by on Social Security of any kind) calculated that the hurricane could have damaged parts of the American economy on a scale comparable to the events of 9/11. One of the firm's spokespersons warned about the effect on the insurance industry, on tourism, leisure, hospitality and the stock market. In fact the stock markets in London and America hardly fluttered. In any case any tremors were overridden by the good news for the kind of people who may consult Deloitte. Arguing that the damage to oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico would cause a shortage,

the oil firms were quick to raise their prices. On the assumption that because almost a third of America's coffee crop would have been stored in New Orleans the price of coffee on the market soared by 11 percent.

Profits

The construction industry - notably part of the Haliburton Group, which was once bossed by Vice President Dick Cheney and which prospers so well out of repairing the damage the American forces have done in Iraq - was eagerly preparing bids to reconstruct the damaged cities of the Gulf. Shares in Haliburton did not fall but went up by two percent. In England shares in Aggreko, who supply portable power generators, soared by 7.5 percent and shares in Wolesley, which supplies plumbing and heating, were up by three percent. One financial adviser, after the obligatory acknowledgement that a lot of people had suffered terribly in the hurricane, had something of a song in his heart :

"The impact of events such as Katrina, while devastating for the people involved, tend to be quite short-term and you should be investing in America, or any other region for that matter, for the long-term - at least five years and probably 10 or more. Over that period, can you afford to be out of the world's largest economy and stock market, which has some of the best companies in the World?"

And how is the reconstruction likely to turn out? If the experience of the aftermath of the Boxing Day tsunami is any guide, the face of places like New Orleans will be changed for ever as luxury tourism is foisted on the place, leaving one or two small areas where a kind of sanitised memory is allowed to survive. The chairman of the New Orleans Business Council ominously spoke of how "to use this catastrophe as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change the dynamic" of the city. Well, the people of New Orleans and of the rest of the world have been warned.

Socialism

Katrina was a disaster of epic proportions which no style of human organisation, even one based on communal ownership and control of the means of life, could have averted or controlled. But such a society would have prevented a calamity on the scale of New Orleans. A classless society, organised on the basis of human interests, would not have misjudged the power of Katrina, nor compromised the safety of its people in its path by undermining the strength of defences because it was financially advisable to do so. It would not have bungled any necessary rescue and support services. And as an open and democratic society it would not have been plagued by politicians disguising their true failures and impotence behind a screen of lies. ■

RC

Aspects of the disaster, published by Indymedia, United States.

● The city has a 40% illiteracy rate.

● New Orleans Police Department officers, who have been accused of drug running, corruption and theft, were 'caught' on videotape looting a Wal-Mart. The Arizona Republic reported that its local sheriffs "watched New Orleans police officers loading their patrol cars with items taken from various businesses, a couple of pharmacies, a hardware store, an auto-parts store and a grocery store."

● The Bush administration, in every year since 2001, has cut or refused to fund New Orleans flood control, and ignored scientists warnings of increased hurricanes as a result of global warming.

● There are many first-hand reports of relief organizations being refused entry into the city. The Red Cross' official website explains "The state Homeland Security Department had requested--and continues to request--that the American Red Cross not come back into New Orleans following the hurricane. Our presence would keep people from evacuating and encourage others to come into the city."

● New Orleans is the only deepwater port in the US served by six class-one railroads. None of these were used to take people out of the city.

● Tons of food ready for delivery by air to refugees was halted because of President Bush's visit to the city. "We had arrangements to airlift food by helicopter to these folks, and now the food is sitting in trucks because they won't let helicopters fly," said Casey O'Shea, U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon's chief of staff. It was not reported whether the supplies ever actually made it to those who most needed it.

● Private military companies have been employed to guard the property of the city's millionaires from looters.

● "As we approached the bridge, armed Gretna sheriffs formed a line across the foot of the bridge. Before we were close enough to speak, they began firing their weapons over our heads. We questioned why we couldn't cross the bridge. They responded that the West Bank was not going to become New Orleans and there would be no Superdomes in their City. These were code words for if you are poor and black, you are not crossing the Mississippi River and you were not getting out of New Orleans."

<http://neworleans.indymedia.org>

Katrina: the poor suffer more

The recently sickening ravages of property and life wrought by Hurricane Katrina have been extensively covered by the media, but with some rather glaring omissions.

The first was that a society based on the rights of property over life had a great deal to do with exacerbating an already

millions of starving and ill children who die each and every year around the world for whom there is simply not enough money to go around? While relief for those left in New Orleans was certainly offered by the Red Cross and eventually by the state, few asked whether it is sane or even effective to meet critical human needs depending upon how much money or how many volunteers may be assembled. What if those of you donating a few dollars at supermarkets for Katrina victims simply don't raise enough? Does that mean that the plight of those struck by disaster is entirely the result of your personal failures, or of a society in which wealth is produced only to be sold, and not to meet our needs? We socialists think the latter.

Nobody on television asked whether by rights the wealth of society should not be automatically due to all individuals. Thus, the million New Orleanians with homes tragically destroyed suddenly enter into that category of "homeless," those without the monetary means to buy or rent. Nobody on the idiot box asked the most obvious question: "why shouldn't homes be available to anybody who needs them?"

A further question never raised in recent television coverage was about the severity of the storm itself. Many scientists around the world are now convinced that the ecological devastation wrought by modern society has played its part in altering global weather patterns, even while conservative politicians and owners of polluting industry deny such hypotheses and try hard to keep them from being discussed in the media. Tropical forests are vanishing at the rate of city sizes per day, ice is melting at the polar caps, storms are increasing and worsening, temperatures are rising, ozone levels are diminishing. Quite a few scientists have made calculations that if

present levels of ecological destruction continue unabated for the next ten, twenty or thirty years, then catastrophic alterations in weather will no longer be avoidable, even if pollution were stopped after such a date. While it is difficult to be certain if the damage to the planet caused by capitalist production has been responsible for recent changes for the worse in weather, one thing is clear - such dire warnings from the scientific community are not going to be taken seriously. This leaves us rightly concerned whether we are heading into an era in which such similarly devastating phenomena as Hurricane Katrina will not be exceptions, but the rule. What are you all going to do about it? When will citizens take control, and stop leaving critical decision making to leaders of all parties led by the supremacy of corporate interests. What are you personally going to do to render this planet a joy to share, to create a society for you and your children that meets our needs?

The World Socialist Party of the United States is a companion party of the World Socialist Movement. It aims to bring about a nonviolent revolution in the ownership of the means of production from private or state to common. In such a society, money will no longer be necessary, as the things and services we require to live fully (food, clothes, medical services, homes, transportation, and other modern human needs) will be freely available to all. This is because the means of production will be owned in common by the entire community, and will be democratically controlled by that community as well, a society in which leaders are replaced by truly democratic decision making of all citizens.

In a society of common ownership, all war in such a nationless world will be immediately abolished, while the end of starvation and dire poverty will quickly follow suit. Without the barriers of economic cost holding back human progress, more ecologically sustainable ways to provide energy and production for ourselves will be immediately planned and created on a global basis. We will become for the first time in history a truly human family looking after itself. ■

Dr. Who (World Socialist Party of US)



Bush leads the rescue effort

traumatic situation. What we witnessed the most on television were pathetic yet stark scenes of poor people huddled in a sports stadium, homes lost forever, awaiting supplies and aid that took endless days to arrive. During this time more people died, the ill were uncared for, and conditions of existence plummeted to unsanitary levels often associated with the shanty towns of South America or Turkish prisons, but not with the United States of America. While these already traumatised people had to endure an additional trauma of abandonment and lack of the basic wherewithal to survive, millions of homes and offices unused and awaiting buyers sat empty around the country. But they were not available to the million homeless of New Orleans, whose life savings had been lost in homes rendered rubble, or who simply never had the savings to invest in their own home.

Nobody on television asked the most salient question of all: "should people struck by terrible tragedy be victims of charity at all, or should they instead be automatically entitled to society's wealth simply by demonstrating clear-cut needs for homes, hygiene, food, clothes, and comfort?" Society as presently constituted is not geared toward the satisfaction of our needs, but rather to the sale of commodities to yield profits, and such a society proved itself demonstrably incapable of meeting needs of the dire and desperate kinds that followed on the heels of Katrina. But hey, there are already millions of homeless and poor people in the United States who are not entitled to those vast numbers of empty homes awaiting purchase, so why should these victims of extreme weather be any more fortunate?

Had you or I decided to by-pass the sleeping government and simply pick up a couple of homeless individuals and drop them off in another town, we would have had to do so only by taking time off work. Most of us, as workers, have commitments to our employers that may not be so casually by-passed. And in capitalism, even relief efforts are subject to the welfare agencies' budgetary constraints. Ever heard of the tens of

"society proved itself demonstrably incapable of meeting needs that followed on the heels of Katrina"

Colour coding - blacks 'loot' while whites 'find', apparently, in the New Orleans disaster

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it hit.

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Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Graythen)

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Why they dropped the bombs

Richard Headicar concludes his analysis of the reasons why the US dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

Understandably Allied servicemen involved in the Pacific war, many of whom experienced the unspeakable horrors of Japanese prisoner of war camps, welcomed the atomic bombs as a "miracle of deliverance". With a few notable exceptions, even those historians who conclude that dropping the bombs was not necessary to obtain Allied victory - that it would not even have been necessary to invade Japan - generally accept that using the bombs probably shortened the war. Even if only by a few weeks. In the grim reality of war, the life of a single comrade saved is worth a thousand enemy slain.

But what would such men think if they knew that, far from shortening the war, the atomic bombs actually prolonged it? That for all the crocodile tears shed about the "terrible plight" of the captives; for all hollow praise heaped upon the "heroic sacrifices" of the armed forces they were, after all, merely expendable pawns in the unrelenting hostilities of power politics? That "bringing our boys back as soon as possible", was not actually the first order of business?

Did the US want Russian intervention?

By the time the atom bombs were dropped, Allied victory through overwhelming military superiority was virtually assured. Also, at Potsdam in July 1945, Stalin had confirmed his intention to enter the war on 15 August. As President Truman, writing in his private journal, noted at the time: "Fini Japs when that comes about". In fact Russia declared war on Japan on 8 August and the following day - just hours later in Far East time - Russian troops attacked in Manchuria and Korea. The rapidity with which they penetrated against the cream of the Japanese army is convincing evidence for many commentators that Japanese surrender would have swiftly followed. Surely such a potentially decisive intervention would have been welcomed by those pledged to "bringing our boys back as soon as possible"? Surely every effort would have been made to encourage the speediest possible participation of the Russian military as a matter of utmost urgency? Not so!

The attitude of the US policy makers regarding Russian intervention, even though initially positive, was never entirely free from fear-fuelled ambivalence. And, corresponding with increasingly encouraging reports from the Manhattan project, that attitude eventually hardened to become actively negative. Well-founded mutual suspicion governed every move; trickery and deception concerning their respective intentions was extensively employed by both sides. And, once again, American Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, unashamedly declared his hand. He thought that it would be "regrettable" if Russia became

involved in the war. He was desperately worried that if Stalin knew about the awesome power of the atomic bomb (he did) he might "immediately enter the war". So Byrnes sought to delay Russian entry. That his attempts were unsuccessful is largely irrelevant and hardly the point, which is that the US leaders did not want Russian intervention. Firstly, because they were intent on using their atomic bombs before the war in the Pacific ended and, secondly, they were reluctant to share their prospective economic and political influence in the Far East with anyone else, friend or foe.

Although Stalin had no qualms about rescinding the Neutrality Pact with Japan, the likelihood of Russia entering the Pacific War any earlier than it did, even had it been urged to do so by America, was extremely remote. Yet there were two other avenues through which the US administration, had it had the slightest inclination to pursue them, could almost certainly have succeeded in shortening the conflict. Instead, to serve their own agenda, they approached these avenues with sufficient circumspection to frustrate every overture; each manoeuvre calculated to obstruct the least chance of any kind of rapprochement.

Was Japan really suing for peace?

The evidence that it was is overwhelming. Astonishingly, Japanese diplomats initiated peace feelers as early as late summer 1944. They continued to do so - through Sweden, Switzerland, Russia and even the Vatican. Particular efforts were made via Moscow in the (mistaken) belief that the Neutrality Pact that existed between Japan and Russia made it the most viable channel. Despite the fact that Stalin had previously declined to renew the pact, Japanese fears were somewhat mollified (but by no means



Suspicion, trickery and deception - the Potsdam conference, July 1945

quelled) by his assurance that it would continue to inform his decisions until its expiry in April 1946. But by the end of 1943 he had already made known to Allied leaders his intention to enter the war against Japan and signed an agreement confirming it, at Yalta in February 1945.

On the day following the collapse of Okinawa (21 June 1945), Emperor Hirohito told the Supreme Council for the Direction of War to reverse their "Basic Policy", urging them to seek peace by diplomatic means: "You will consider the question of ending the war as soon as possible". It was the specific mission of the new cabinet of Prime Minister, Baron Kantaro Suzuki (appointed 7 April 1945), to seek peace. But neither the US nor Russia were interested in Japan's efforts for peace; the

US wanted to wait until it could drop the atom bombs and Russia until it was ready to declare war. Not one of the messages imparted to Moscow by the Japanese ambassador was passed on to America. This made little difference, however, since all Japanese codes - diplomatic ("Magic") and operational ("ultra") had long been broken. An extract from "Magic" N° 1205 (13 July 1945) deciphering a cable from Foreign Minister Togo to Ambassador Sato reads: "His Majesty the Emperor, mindful of the fact that the present war daily brings greater evil and sacrifice upon the peoples of all belligerent powers, desires from his heart that it may be quickly terminated". The same transcript further states: "It is the Emperor's private intention to send Prince Konoye to Moscow as a Special Envoy . . ." And so he did, but Moscow would not receive him. Later President Truman "thanked" Marshal Stalin.

Stephen Harper, in his book *Miracle of Deliverance*, subtitled 'The Case for the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki', writes, with commendable honesty: "Ways could have been found to explore the Japanese peace moves had there been any desire to do so, but it seems clear that the doctrine of unconditional surrender . . . had become compulsive thinking - an Allied blindspot".

Was it unconditional surrender?

On 21 July an ultimatum - the Potsdam Declaration - was given to the Japanese government. It was issued on behalf of the President of the United States, the President of Nationalist China and the Prime Minister of Great Britain; but not Russia. Its language was uncompromising as these extracts show:

"Following are our terms. We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.

"There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest . . . We call upon the government of Japan to proclaim the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces . . ."

Hirohito, June 1945 - "You will consider the question of ending the war as soon as possible".

Despite the inclusion of phrases such as : "We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved . . .", "Freedom of speech, of religion and of thought . . .", ". . . fundamental human rights shall be established" - the single non-negotiable concession, repeatedly demanded by Japan, was noticeably absent: a guarantee of the Emperor's position. A crucial paragraph offering just such a guarantee was deleted by the US Secretary of State James F. Byrnes. Consequently, the Declaration was deemed unacceptable by Japan - just as the US hoped it would be.

Much discussion has ensued concerning the nature of the Japanese response. Some analysts consider it to be an outright rejection; others no more than a pause for breath. Confusion was sown by the use of the Japanese term "mokusatsu", which can mean: "take no notice of"; "treat with silent



contempt" or (most probably) "withhold comment". Some writers have emphasised the jingoistic and defiant statements trumpeted in the Japanese media, but these were obviously face-saving propaganda exercises designed to boost national morale. Other compelling evidence makes it abundantly clear that, so far as Japan was concerned, negotiations were still very much ongoing. And that the US was aware of it.

"Magic" intercept N° 1218 (26 July 1945) revealed the text of another message sent from Foreign Minister Togo to Ambassador Sato. This was a reaction to a broadcast made to the Japanese on 21 July, on behalf of the US. The broadcast was made by Captain (later Rear Admiral) Ellis M. Zacharias, later to write an article for Look magazine (6 June 1950) entitled "How We Bungled the Japanese Surrender". Part of the "Magic" summary stated: "It is impossible for us to accept unconditional surrender, no matter in what guise, but . . . there is no objection to the restoration of peace on the basis of the Atlantic Charter". But once again Byrnes intervened and claimed that it was best to refrain from designating the broadcast as "official".

That the issue of "unconditional surrender" was the primary stumbling block to the achievement of a peace settlement had been recognised long before. A Joint Intelligence Committee in March 1940 commented: "The crux of the political situation will lie in the all-important status of the Japanese Emperor". After the war was over, both Secretary of War Stimson and the President recorded their conclusions. "[H]istory might find that the United States, by its delay in stating its position [on the surrender terms] had prolonged the war" wrote Stimson in his memoirs. Or as Truman succinctly remarked during the compiling of his: "It was because of the unconditional surrender policy against Japan that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were wiped out".

Two days after the Potsdam Declaration, Prince Konoye was still making frantic efforts to make contact with Russian diplomats, contradicting the generally accepted notion that the Declaration had been dismissed out of hand by Japan. In any event, the decision to drop the bomb had already been taken: finally confirmed on the same day as the Declaration.

On 10 August, the morning after the second bomb was dropped, an offer of surrender from Japan was received in Washington. Once more it stipulated that any agreement should " . . . not compromise any demand which prejudiced the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler". Stimson favoured its acceptance; Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal suggested a compromise; Byrnes opposed it. For once, Byrnes had to give way but, nevertheless, he was the one who drafted the reply, the key phrase of which permitted that vital Japanese proviso: "From the moment of surrender the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers". It was enough. The bombs, apparently, had not persuaded Japan to drop its proviso concerning the Emperor.

Byrnes's reluctance to bend, even at this juncture, is hard to fathom precisely. What is seldom mentioned in popular accounts of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however, is that a third bomb would have been delivered and ready to drop by 17 August 1945.

Why were the bombs dropped?

A complex labyrinth of reasons lay behind the decision to drop the atomic bombs. Once the vastly expensive machinery of production had commenced, and the original purpose of its instigation forgotten, sufficient resolve not to use it ceased to exist. The astronomical investment of public funds needed to be justified; the widespread public antipathy of the American population towards the Japanese following the Pearl Harbour attack, demanded revenge - a mood of which the American leadership was acutely aware. As Secretary for War Stimson subsequently observed: "No man, in our position and subject to our responsibilities, holding in his hands a weapon of such possibilities could have failed to use it and afterwards look his countrymen in the face".

A number of 'revisionist' historians confidently assert that the primary motive was to gain diplomatic advantage: a powerful political lever allowing the US to dominate future negotiations with the Soviet Union. They make a powerful case and undoubtedly this was a major consideration in the formulation of atomic policy. But this could have been accomplished with just a single

bomb and, surely, not necessarily on a heavily-populated city.

The fact that two bombs were dropped, however - without warning - on specifically targeted and crowded locations which had



Russian columns enter Changchun, capital of Manchuria, 1945

been spared aerial bombardment; the fact that each bomb had different technology (one uranium-explosion; one plutonium-implosion), each with different yields, dropped at different heights but both resulting in prolonged and deadly after-effects of which little was understood, suggests the conclusion that the primary motives might have been the seldom mentioned (almost unmentionable) one of "scientific" experimentation. A conclusion that seems to be confirmed by the grim recommendations of both the Interim and Target committees detailed in the first part of this article (last month).

The terrible war in the Pacific, in common with all wars between capitalist states, had its origins in the protection and expansion of economic interests. There seems to be no limit to the degradation and cruelty utilised to protect those interests. Anyone visiting the Hiroshima museum would be able to view the leaflets that were dropped warning of an atomic attack. In an act of macabre cynicism that almost defies belief, those leaflets were not dropped until 9 August - three days after the bombing. Things improved for Nagasaki - they were only one day late. ■

RICHARD HEADICAR

A list of the sources of the quotes in this article or further information on particular points can be obtained on request to: Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN.

Cooking the Books (1)

The market fails again

Within a month of the Live8 concerts that

were supposed to influence the leaders of world capitalism to do something about poverty in Africa, the charities had to get their begging bowls out again. This time for a famine in Niger, an ex-French colony to the north of Nigeria with a population of over 11.6 million.

In October last year various international agencies including the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation signalled that, due to a bad harvest and an invasion of locusts, cereal production in Niger in 2004-5 was likely to be 7.5 percent below normal. In accordance with the law of supply and demand the price of millet, the main cereal grown

and consumed in Niger, began to rise, with the result that the farmers whose crop had failed were unable to afford to buy enough food for their families. Malnutrition, especially amongst children, grew.

The government reacted by bringing in a scheme to sell millet at a reduced price, but although this was below the market price it was still two times higher than the price the farmers had received for their 2003-4 crop.

Dr Isabelle Defourny, of Médecins Sans Frontières, takes up the story:

"In early June, Niger's prime minister acknowledged that the government's response was ineffective when he noted that hundreds of thousands of the 3.5 million people threatened by the food shortage were too poor to be able to purchase cereal, even at a low price. Those most severely affected by the food crisis have the least resources, including farmers whose harvests were poor and cattle producers and

craftsmen. Many had already exhausted their resources, selling goods and animals to feed themselves." (Messages, MSF newsletter, July-August, www.msf.fr/documents/base/2005-07-01-Messages137VA.pdf)

MSF urged that "free food distribution is the only way to keep the situation from worsening and to prevent large numbers of deaths", a perfectly reasonable proposal if we were living in a society geared to serving human needs and welfare. But we're not. The authorities took a different view, for reasons explained by social researcher, Jean-Hervé Jezequel, in an interview in the same issue of Messages:

" . . . in early June, at a meeting of the Joint Commission for Consultation, the decision-making body of the 'action plan' which includes representatives of the state and of institutional donors, the government of Niger declared that despite the seriousness of the food crisis, it would not set up free distribution operations.

The only political reaction from the institutional donors came from the ambassador of France, who was glad there was a 'policy that will not destabilize the markets'. The ambience was almost surreal: ignoring the emergency food situation, economic considerations were, without hesitation, given priority over the fate of endangered people."

The French newspaper *Libération* reported that some cereal merchants had held back stocks to drive up prices further and that others had "disposed of their stocks in neighbouring Nigeria where the population has a higher purchasing power" (9 August).

So, yet again, as in every "food crisis" since the Great Starvation in Ireland in the 1840s, the workings of capitalism have produced the obscene spectacle of the export of food from an area where people are starving because, not having money, they don't constitute a market and so don't count.

When a 'land for sale by auction' notice appeared at the end of a cul-de-sac in Billericay, Essex, the reaction was swift and well organised. A letter expressing concern that the land might be bought and occupied by members of the travelling community with a detrimental effect on the value of their properties was immediately prepared by two residents and delivered to 180 houses in the vicinity. Within days a meeting was held and a limited company set up with some 45 neighbours contributing to the eventual purchase price of £75,000. The land purchased is part of a 'field', thickly overgrown mainly with hawthorns, most of which is owned by a property company in the anticipation that its green-belt status will some time be changed.

Whether or not the fears of residents in this instance were well founded, the near impossibility of finding legal stopping places means that Gypsies and Travellers have been forced into confrontational situations with local authorities and with members of the settled community in the areas where they are encamped.

It is estimated that in England there are between 4,000 and 5,000 vans and from 16,000 to 20,000 Travellers and Gypsies either in transit or without a legal place to stay (*Environmental Health Journal*, April 2005, online). The shortage of sites means that Travellers are forced to move on, to the detriment of their health and their children's education. It also means that many more than were intended are stopping on legal sites. This for example is the situation at Crays Hill in Basildon, also in Essex, where there are some 30 legal plots on a site but more than sixty are occupied illegally. Similar situations can be found in various parts of the country.

The plight of Gypsies and Travellers is not a popular cause. In 1973 Jeremy Sandford wrote in his book *Gypsies* of the situation for Gypsies who had always been vulnerable to attack from those who "perhaps from envy of their free and easy ways" want to drive them from "our hedgerows, commons and public places" but were now faced with legislation which effectively outlawed their way of life. He also stated in his conclusion that at the present rate of progress "it may well be into the 2000s' before there was a place on a site for every British gypsy". However far from there being progress the situation has become much worse.

The 1960 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act had "forced families to move off agricultural land onto lay-bys and car parks." A government survey revealed

Are Gypsies the problem?

the extent of traveller poverty: more than two thirds were living on sites without access to running water or rubbish disposal (Helen O'Nions, *The Marginalisation of Gypsies*, 1995). The 1968 Caravan Sites Act had the prime purpose of remedying this situation. Local Authorities were mandated to provide "adequate

family groups. Councils had additional powers to remove Gypsies not on designated sites. The Act did not work as intended, not least because councils found ways around the duty to provide sites. By the time the Conservative government removed the statutory obligations in 1994 one third of Travellers had no legal place to stay. During the Thatcher era thousands of traditional stopping places disappeared.

In what is seen as an attempt to make Gypsies abandon the nomadic way of life the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 ended the duty for local authorities to provide sites and removed government funding for them. It also became a criminal offence for caravans to stop on the

highway, unoccupied land, common land or land without consent. Gypsies were encouraged to buy land and develop their own sites, but because of the restrictive criteria set by councils some 80 per cent of these applications are turned down. This is why some have resorted to buying and

moving on to land before seeking planning permission. The position whereby green-belt land could be considered for Gypsy sites ("a recognition of the difficulty of finding suitable sites in suburbia") was ended on the grounds that "Gypsies enjoy a privileged position in the planning system". Ironically councils were given encouragement to allow building and development on green-belt sites.

The Labour government has resumed the funding of sites and has increased the amount it intends to spend on them. However it has not put the responsibilities of councils back to the pre-1994 position. The Housing Act 2004 placed a duty on local authorities to include Gypsies and Travellers in their local housing assessments and "demonstrate how these needs will be met", with the Secretary of State having powers to direct a local authority to produce a plan. Brentwood is the first council to be challenged in this way. If the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is successful in getting Brentwood to comply it will encourage other councils "to get on with the job". Many councils do not need encouragement; the *Environmental Health Journal* cites the example of Norfolk, whose Traveller Liaison Group has already produced a Traveller protocol and has five authorised sites and is planning a transit site.

Basildon council has 106 authorised sites but still does not have enough places for all of the Travellers who wish to stop in the district. Wakefield claims to have one of the largest authorised Traveller sites in the country and is the first council to announce plans to apply Anti-Social Behaviour



Scenes from a caravan and gypsy effigy burning, Fittle, Sussex, Oct 2003. The police dropped all charges against the 12 villagers responsible.

accommodation for Gypsies residing in or resorting to their area". However, the sites that were provided by councils were not necessarily to the liking of Gypsies in that they made insufficient allowance for their lifestyle. For example the collecting of scrap metal and keeping of animals could be forbidden, and there would not be room for the gathering together of extended

Orders to particular illegal encampments. These require a lower standard of proof than normal court proceedings but the Gypsy Council is advising Gypsies to challenge the orders through the courts.

In some instances local people protesting about illegal traveller sites are also sympathetic to the plight of Gypsies and Travellers; for example, the Cottenham Residents' Association and the Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition forwarded a joint statement to the Government pointing out that the provision of adequate sites by all local authorities would address the acute shortage of sites and also bring an end to illegal and unauthorised encampments.

Whilst emphasis is put on the problems caused by illegal sites and the excess numbers who are stopping on authorised sites, the widespread perception is of Gypsies and Travellers as people who live outside of the constraints which the settled community are bound by, who do not contribute in work or taxes but commit crime, spoil the environment with their rubbish and generally cause trouble by their very presence in an area.

Gypsies and Travellers are much like other people; most of them do work, though not necessarily in full-time wage labour, and they do pay taxes. A study for the Rowntree



imposed on scrap metal dealing.

I live in that cul-de-sac in Billericay but as a Socialist did not take part in the anti-Traveller action of the others. That would be to target a group of fellow

more difficult over recent years including legal restrictions, the disappearance of traditional stopping sites (some after hundreds of years in use), constantly being moved on. Other factors are the reduction in casual farm work, and restrictions

workers for problems caused by capitalism. Could the reasonable enough demands of the Travellers be met within capitalism? Possibly. It may be that local authorities will be persuaded to fulfil their obligations but, since they are faced with competing demands on their finances, probably at the expense of other local services. But what will never be able to be ended under capitalism is the competition between workers for jobs, housing and amenities arising out of the artificial scarcity that is built-in to it and which gives rise to and sustains divisive prejudices amongst those who are not socialists. It was precisely because there are so many problems which cannot be solved within the capitalist system that I became a Socialist. ■

PAT DEUTZ



Cooking the Books (2)

Feudal relic

In July the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee issued a report on the finances of the Duchy of Cornwall which, since feudal times, has provided a private income for the heir to the throne. A reminder that the "royal family" not only supply heads of state for UK Capitalism Inc but are also aristocrats in their own right, with their own landed estates.

The thrust of the committee's report - dominated as the committee is by New Labour MPs who favour a "modernised" capitalism - was that Prince Charles was not running the Duchy as a proper capitalist enterprise. But the Duchy is a landed estate rather than a capitalist corporation. The aim is still of course to end up with a surplus, but Charles' income comes mainly from the rents paid to his estate by tenant farmers and, increasingly it seems, commercial firms for the use of the land he has inherited from previous heirs to the throne.

According to the report, the Duchy's assets at the end of 2004 were valued at £428 million, most of it land.

England was the classic country of a landowning class of this type, and Marx's mid-19th century analysis of the operation of capitalism which then still had a large agricultural sector, like that of Adam Smith and David Ricardo before him, was based on a three class system: a landowning class renting out its land to capitalist tenant farmers who employ wage workers. These latter produce surplus value which is then shared between the capitalist employer as profit and the landowner as rent.

Ground-rent is a pure monopoly income which accrues to people who, for accidental historical reasons, happen to be owners of a portion of the globe; which allows them to say, even to capitalists, "you can't use my land for your farm or your factory or whatever unless you hand over to me a share of the proceeds". So landowners are parasites on parasites. In the 19th century this was a big issue with capitalist politicians continually raising the "land question", but it eventually ended in compromise and intermarriage between members of the two classes. We can now talk of an essentially two class system - capitalists and workers - even though ground-rent remains money

for nothing.

Actually, Charles is also a bit of a capitalist in his own right. He markets organic food under the label "Duchy Originals" but which, according to the *Times* (22 July), "made a profit of £1 million on a turnover of £40 million, which most commercial enterprises would regard as an inefficient return". But then, if you've got an income from your private estate of £11.9 million in the tax year 2003-4 (Committee Report) you don't have to be so ruthless in your pursuit of any commercial profit as you would be if this was your only source of income. But the New Labour MPs are right. If all capitalist firms took the same aristocratic attitude to profit-making as Charles, then British capitalism would be in trouble on world markets. The typical capitalist firm has to try to maximise its profits, not just to please its shareholders, but to keep in a fit state to continue to compete by having funds to invest in means to reduce its costs.

In the 1860s when Marx was writing *Capital* the typical capitalist was still an individual owner who ran his own business or a partnership of such owners, though this was beginning to change with the coming of the limited liability company. Marx described the individual capitalist as "capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will" (Volume I, chapter 4). Thus, the individual capitalist's greed was not a personal failing but a reflection of the fact that he personified capital's need to expand continuously.

Limited companies (which Marx did discuss in Volume III of *Capital*) are now the dominant form and maximising profits is no longer a mere personal motivation; it is a legal obligation on those who run companies. The same applies to pension funds and other so-called "institutional investors"; the managers and trustees of such funds are under a legal obligation to maximise the fund's income or face a breach of trust charge. Which makes them as ruthless profit-seekers as any capitalist corporation or 19th century Gradgrind.

Prince Charles is just not in this league, but then he's more of a personification of landed property.



Foundation among New Age travellers found that nearly half of those surveyed were in work and many more had worked at some time during the year. Most of the accusations regarding criminal behaviour are unsubstantiated but as in the rest of society some commit crimes. Ironically many thousands of Gypsies (non-Gypsies) choose to take caravan and camping holidays, and cook meals in their gardens; some dump their old sofas and other rubbish in country lanes.

Gypsies have maintained their identity through many centuries of prejudice and discrimination. They may choose to call themselves Travellers but not all Travellers are Gypsies and not all Gypsies are of a single group. Changes in their lifestyle have inevitably been made. The most obvious being the disappearance of horse-drawn caravans which had earlier replaced bender tents. We have shown some of the things which have made the itinerant life



Left: workers during the recent Gate Gourmet strike. Above: catering staff in happier times

Gate Gourmet - Another Union Sell-Out?

For those given to circular reasoning, the announcement on 12 September this year of a deal for a redundancy package for sacked Gate Gourmet airline catering workers will be seen as yet another example of trade union officials selling out or even deliberately sabotaging the struggles of the working class. The case seems harsh and clear. On 10 August Gate Gourmet, which provides airborne catering to British Airways passengers, sacked 667 workers - infamously, now - by megaphone. The employees had stopped work and had gathered in the canteen to discuss developments in ongoing redundancy negotiations - chiefly the management's decision to take on 130 new temporary workers. This was clearly a provocative move to try and undermine the existing staff's position. The staff were told to return immediately to work, and they refused.

There is clear evidence of deliberate provocation - security guards were on hand to control the situation; extra staff were bussed in immediately to replace the sacked workers; the following working day, all staff received dismissal letters, even those who had been off sick the previous day. The firm even went as far as to inform other companies they work with of the dispute in advance.

Clearly, management had chosen the best time to orchestrate this attack: the height of the holiday season, with the guarantee of headlines about holiday chaos and passenger misery from the uniformly loyal lickspittles in the capitalist press. This strategy was given a fillip when British Airways baggage handlers heard about this ruthless behaviour, and walked out to help defend people they work with daily, who are moreover in many cases their friends and neighbours. A wildcat solidarity strike. This spread the disruption and guaranteed more passenger misery, chaos and gangrene - or whatever other unpleasantness tabloids are attributing to strikes today.

The strike lasted for two days, grounding hundreds of flights. Eventually, the baggage handlers returned to work, and union officials from the Transport and General Workers Union began negotiations over the status of the sacked workers. Although for legal reasons the union had been unable to support the either the wildcat or the solidarity strike they did established a picket of the company's headquarters to continue their campaign.

Even this was too much for Gate Gourmet, and having successfully called out their allies in the press to their cause, they

then sent in their reserves from the state. The High Court was asked to rule the picket unlawful - to protect those staff who wanted to continue working (as their devoted employers had it) from being intimidated by the people who had been sacked by megaphone and escorted from the grounds by gentle flower scented security guards. A shining display of concern for their staff.

Although the court ruled that the picket was 'lawful peaceful assembly' picketers were forbidden from blocking the route into work, taking photos of staff or even trying to talk to them, at all. Further, the T&G union was made responsible for the conduct of the picket - a move that directly threatened the assets of the union should any infractions of the courts injunction occur.

The role of the law has been significant in this case. Much of the press made hay from the 'illegal secondary industrial action'. This is not strictly correct, secondary action - where workers for one employer strike in support of workers for

“the workers have proven, yet again, that anti-union laws do not stop them taking action”

another - is merely unlawful, not illegal (i.e. it is not protected by law, as striking is, but is not itself prevented by law). This merely means that unions who engage in the practice are liable for civil proceedings from employers for claims of restraint of trade. It was protection from such litigation - in the aftermath of the precedent of the famous Taff Vale case of 1901 - that spurred the growth of the Labour Party and the unions' interest in it.

Calling the action illegal, though, has a significant symbolic and ideological role in giving the impression - to a generally law-abiding populace - that striking is criminal and by extension wicked. A great many comment pages on the internet were filled with people complaining about secondary action (note, not solidarity action) and bemoaning the return to the 1970s.

This dispute is being used by union leaders to renew calls for changes to industrial relations law in the UK, citing it as a hard case that justifies modification of

those laws. At last month's TUC conference the call went up that at least workers in firms with contracted out services - like BA's catering - should be allowed to engage in solidarity action. This is incredibly unlikely, since the government is desperate not to look even remotely like it supports trade unions and seems, in fact, to be proud of the restrictive industrial relations law in the UK.

It is also unlikely, because such a course would utterly undermine the whole point of contracting out - especially in its Public Finance Initiative (PFI) form of contracting out state services. Outsourcing and contracting-out previously in-house services is meant to change the legal standing of union members so that they are officially working for different companies even if they work together to provide a service. It is classic divide and rule.

The downside of this tack, though, appears to have surfaced in the Gate Gourmet dispute. It turns out that the catering firm (or at least the Gate Gourmet part of a bigger holding company) is losing something like £25 million a year. These strikes have come when Gate Gourmet has been in the middle of trying to renegotiate their contract with BA. The seemingly provoked strike, then, works advantageously for them, because it means they can use the disruption from their cost cutting exercise to damage BA's service and business. In effect, it seems they have taken industrial action to renegotiate their contractual terms.

Contracting out means handing over control of labour management to outside companies, and opens up a firm - seemingly - to damaging industrial disputes not of their making but in which they are snared.

All that aside, the workers have proven, yet again, that anti-union laws do not stop them taking action. It is, and always has been, the determination and consciousness of workers that guides their disputes. No law could stop people refusing to work. As in most of the recent unofficial action - other baggage handlers, Royal Mail strikes, etc. - management will not try and pursue the matter afterwards anyway - the damaging repercussions to their own business usually outweigh the benefits of hounding strikers or bringing legal action. That is why Gate Gourmet pre-empted trouble by its union busting attack.

It is negotiating from a position of its bottom line - making losses. It wants to shed around 700 jobs. The deal struck with the Union allows 300 of the workers - previously classed as sacked - to apply for

redundancy at 2.5 times the statutory level. In such a situation where saving jobs is clearly going to be impossible, pushing up the market price of cutting jobs is a rational course for the trade union. However, only half the sacked strikers are likely to get that money, as Gate Gourmet wants to try and ensure that its union-busting sticks. The union continues to campaign to have the remainder reinstated, but this appears unlikely.

The employees were hardly living in the lap of luxury to begin with - catering assistants were pulling in something like £12,000 per annum and drivers around £16,000 - this in the London area with high housing and general living costs. Management even tried to get staff to come back to work signing a new contract on drastically reduced wages and conditions. When it came to the bottom line, they clearly felt they could ask their workers to stoop lower.

It is pointless to criticise unions for not immediately launching a revolutionary insurrection to protect jobs - they are tools for the workers to engage in the labour

market, not revolutionary organisations. Their memberships are of many different political persuasions, workers banded together for the purpose of protecting their interests. If they have to adapt their outcomes to market realities that is the fault of the market, not the union. Wishing that



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Feeling desperate?

union bureaucrats would be replaced with more radical leaders is no way forward; they, too, would only have to abide by the willingness to fight of their membership and the lie of the labour market, just as the hacks do now.

It is not necessarily personal malice on the part of employers that fuels industrial disputes. Both sides are actors on a stage set to determine their actions. The law of 'no profit no employment' means that these sorts of disputes will always occur. The remorseless impersonal logic of the labour market will ensure that. Workers need to understand that no amount of union secondary action - legal or otherwise - can banish this menace from their lives.

To end the evil of the wages system will take a revolution, though - and it's not going to be started by a spark from a small industrial dispute. The revolution needs to be built in the hearts and minds of workers who can defeat both the force and ideology of the dominant class to remake society. Unions cannot make revolutions, only the working class themselves can. Through clear, determined political action, we can clear the way so that no-one need ever go through struggles like the Gate Gourmet workers again. ■

PIK SMEET

While Capitalism Fiddles

I am a difficult person to please when it comes to weather.

Having lived all my life in Britain, I find the climate too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer. Imagine my dismay then, when, among the dross and the drivel that passes for television in this country, a recent edition of the BBC *Horizon* programme forecast that within twenty years, Britain's climate could be similar to Alaska's, with 1963-type winters every year, pack ice around the British coast and ice storms regularly bringing down electricity and telephone lines. The effects of global warming are melting the Greenland icecap, and increased rainfall is pouring more water into the great rivers of Siberia, which drain huge areas of Asia and flow northwards into the Arctic Ocean.

The effect of all this extra fresh water at high northern latitudes is to interfere with the circulation of the Gulf Stream, or the 'Conveyor' as it is now known. The Conveyor prevents Britain, which is in the same latitude as Labrador, having a harsh Labrador type climate. Warm water from the Gulf of Mexico crosses the Atlantic, and after warming up Britain and Ireland, continues northwards and ensures that Norway's ports are ice free. The contrast with Sweden could not be starker. Sweden exports much of its iron ore through Norwegian ports, because Swedish ports have a tendency to ice up in the winter, as the Baltic does not get the benefit of the Gulf Stream.

The circulation of the Conveyor is dependent on the water maintaining its salinity. Fresh water does not convey the heat as efficiently. Observations off the Faeroe Islands have

revealed that the cold water returning southwards on its way back to the Caribbean is 20 percent less saline than it should be. Based on these observations, climatologists are forecasting that sometime in the next twenty years, the Gulf Stream could shut off. The results would be catastrophic for the whole of North Western Europe. And this is not merely a scientific theory. The Faeroe Islands studies demonstrate that the process could well have already started.

Nobody can be 100 percent certain that the phenomenon of global warming is due to human activity. What can be said with certainty is that if it is a natural process which would have occurred anyway, capitalism's indifference to the future of the planet is exacerbating a problem which has the potential to end life on Earth. Earth Summit after Earth Summit have achieved little or nothing. While capitalism fiddles, Rome burns; huge holes in the ozone layer, the retreat of the glaciers and rising sea levels are problems that are beyond the ability of capitalism to solve, with its concern for profits, and its competing network of two hundred mini-capitalisms, the nation states.

We may be facing a stark choice: a socialist world community or no world at all. It has long been the view of the Socialist Party that capitalism will not collapse of its own accord; it will have to be abolished. So the victory of the case for socialism depends on a change of climate in political thinking. It would be as well, in terms of our own future, that this should be the only serious climatic change we have to face. ■

GREENIE

Human Welfare No, Profits Yes

It hit the country like a bomb. It was unexpected, unusual and more so coming from what is considered as less endowed members of the community. 27 people had died after consuming illicit brew, brewed, distributed and consumed in the full knowledge of the administration and other leaders. Yes. Just like that. The distributor of the brew, Beatrice Kuvia, was arrested and charged with selling beer without a valid licence. But not with the deaths of 27 souls.

The beer was brewed and laced with chemicals not for the good of the consumers but for profit. And that's where the whole story lies.

The vehicle carrying the otherwise referred to as illicit drink passed through 8 police roadblocks and 10 senior police officers had their palms greased to allow the safe passage to the drink to its consumers. The provincial administration knew the woman distributor had been in the business for as long as the existence of the world. She had been taken to court on numerous occasions but in all these had been let off the hook by being fined and, having the money, was able to pay. At other times, she was released to do communal work. So the judiciary is culpable. Who knows, maybe the judges were corrupted.

This inhuman behaviour is prevalent not only in Machakos where the incident occurred but other parts of Kenya as well. It has been happening because there has been no political or otherwise will to stamp out the behaviour. People are ready to be bribed to do things they'd normally not have done. Poor Kenyans are ready to partake any brew just by looking at the price tag. The said brews cost 10 shillings per 300ml bottle.

But in a capitalist world such things are bound to occur. What is paramount is the money coming out of such transactions, but not the morality of the trade. And unless we come to our senses and know what is the real cause of incidents such as the above, we'll continue to die, be deprived of our rights and remain docile in social situations.

It's time socialism tried to rear its head and dare capitalism and capitalists. ■

PATRICK NDEGE,
Nairobi, Kenya

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Islam and Socialism



The first commie? Mohammed. Being moved in mysterious ways: Galloway



"Socialism and Islam are very close, other than on the existence of God" (George Galloway, Sunday Times, 14 August).

We've heard of Jesus the Socialist. Now it's Mohammed the Socialist. What next? As the MP for Bethnal Green, elected by Muslim votes and with the help of the SWP, Galloway would say this. Even so, it is a curious statement for him, as a Catholic who claims to be a socialist, to have made, acknowledging as it does that socialists don't accept "the existence of God".

Since, like all religions, islam lays down precepts for organising life on Earth as well as on what to do to get to heaven (and avoid hell), is there any basis for Galloway's claim that islam is very close to socialism if its religious side is overlooked?

The French historian and orientalist, Maxime Rodinson, who died last year and who adopted a generally Marxist-materialist approach (even though, like Galloway, entertaining some illusions about Russia), certainly didn't think so. In his *Islam and Capitalism* (1966) (written to

refute the view that islam was an impediment to the economic development of Muslim countries), he wrote:

"Economic activity, the search for profit, trade, and, consequently, production for the market, are looked upon with no less favour by Muslim tradition than by the Koran itself" (p. 16).

"[T]he justice advocated by the ideology of the Koran is not that which socialist thought has established as the ideal of a large section of modern society. Muhammad was not a socialist" (p. 23).

"The alleged fundamental opposition of Islam to capitalism is a myth, whether this view be put forward with good intentions or bad" (p. 155).

"[T]he notion that it is possible to use the traditional concept of property found in the Sunnah, and the relative restrictions it imposes, in order to advocate and promote a move by Muslim societies towards socialist structures . . . is utterly fantastic" (p. 175).

In a previous book (1961), *Mohammed*, Rodinson had provided a materialist explanation of the origins of islam. In Mohammed's time (he was born about 571 of the present era and died in 632), the Arabian peninsula was, we can see now, in a process of transition from tribal society, which was breaking down, to a state, for which Mohammed was to be instrumental in laying the foundations.

As Rodinson described it:

"A mercantile economy was growing up in the chinks of the nomadic world. As well as barter, money transactions using dinars (gold deniers) and dirhams (silver drachmae) were becoming commonplace. The Bedouin borrowed from the rich merchants of the towns, got into debt and were sold into slavery or at any rate reduced to dependent status. The disintegration of tribal society had begun. Large and prosperous markets grew up, like the one at Ukaz, attracting foreigners as well as Arabs from every tribe. The tribal limits had been overstepped".

Mohammed himself, although from a modest background, had become one of the wealthy merchants that had emerged, but he realised that something needed to be done to keep Arab society from completely disintegrating under the impact of the unbridled spread of money-commodity relations. His solution was to create a new Arab community welded together by a new religion that would regulate the emerging money/trading economy by imposing some obligations on the rich and some relief for the poor.

Of course as a mystic, Mohammed was not as rationally calculating as this but expressed himself in religious terms. Thus, in the koran (which he believed was dictated to him by the archangel Gabriel, but which in fact, whether he realised it or not, expressed his own thoughts), the greedy and selfish rich are denounced (it is Allah, the Zeus of the pre-islam Arabian pantheon who Mohammed makes dismiss his fellow gods as fakes, who is purportedly speaking):

"Whoso is mean and bumptious on

account of his wealth,
Who denies the most excellent reward,
We shall smooth his way to ultimate misery.

His fortune shall not profit him when he falls into the abyss"

(Koran xcii, 8-11)

Rodinson describes some of the regulations that Mohammed brought in when in 627, after slaughtering the previous rulers, he became the ruler of Medina:

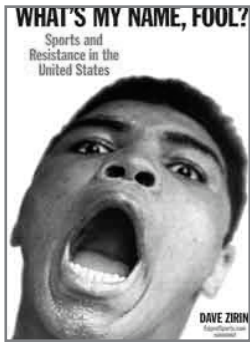
"There are a number of articles laying down fairly strict rules about inheritances. This was apparently necessary in the unsettled situation which resulted from the disintegration of the tribal structure. The stronger must have found it easier to lay hands on the family or tribal possessions of the weaker. The rule of the Koran guaranteed everyone his share, which was worked out in a somewhat complicated fashion. Women were allowed a share in the property. (This seems to have been the custom in Mecca, although not in Medina.). Admittedly their share was only half that of the men . . . Slavery, naturally, persisted. People were urged to treat slaves well and encourage them to gain their freedom. . . . Loans at interest or, more probably, some form of them, were forbidden. This prescription seems in practice to have been aimed chiefly at those who, in the early days of the move to Medina, refused to make loans to the needy without interest . . . But there seems to have been no intention of prohibiting the normal practices of Meccan trade."

So what does Mohammed's "socialism" amount to? Only certain rules to prevent the excesses of the rich from leading to the decomposition of society in 7th century Arabia, but which still accepted the basis of the money/trading economy that had emerged and was spreading. The economic precepts of the koran laid down a framework for the less disruptive functioning of such an economy, placing some obligations on the rich to help the poor while still accepting the division of society into rich and poor.

No doubt it is these limits on the unbridled and selfish accumulation and use of wealth by private individuals that is behind Galloway's claim that "socialism and islam are very close". But this reveals more about his conception of "socialism" than it does about islam. As a former Labour MP, he still thinks in terms of socialism being the control or regulation of capitalism in the interest of the non-rich. But that's not socialism, but reformism. Islam is no more incompatible with this than it is with capitalism. In fact, it is very close to it, except when the religious element which gives its clerics an undue say is brought back. Socialism, properly understood as a non-monetary, non-market society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production, and islam have nothing in common. ■

ADAM BUICK

Dave Zirin: What's My Name, Fool? Sports and Resistance in the United States. Haymarket Books, US\$15.00.



What a refreshing change to read a book about sport that isn't a vapid (auto)biography of some 'star' or a jingoistic celebration of the triumph of some national team! Zirin accepts that sport can be used to stop workers from worrying about things that really matter, but also sees how the passion invested in sport can turn it into a site of resistance, an arena where some of the dominant ideas of society can be challenged. While this is something of an exaggeration, his book is still well worth a read.

Zirin traces various kinds of resistance within American sports, concentrating to begin with on opposition to racism. Professional baseball was segregated for decades; not until 1946, when Jackie Robinson played for the Brooklyn Dodgers, did a black American play in a Major League team. Robinson was subjected to horrendous barracking and threats from opposing players and fans, but his ability eventually got him accepted. His criticism of Paul Robeson and his support for the Republican Party show him as a complex individual who was seen by many later black radicals as a 'white man's Negro', but Zirin argues that Robinson's contribution to opposing racism should be respected.

Of course, integrating baseball did not put an end to racism. While still known as Cassius Clay, Muhammad Ali went into a Kentucky restaurant with his 1960 Olympic boxing gold medal around his neck and was refused service. Zirin examines Ali's career, from reviled and persecuted athlete to his current status as 'a harmless, helpful icon'. The book's title comes from what Ali yelled at ex-champion Floyd Patterson, who fought him as a 'patriotic duty' (Patterson was a Catholic in contrast to Ali as a Black Muslim). He was drafted into the army, and his response was 'I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong', at a time when there was little opposition to the US war in Vietnam. As with Robinson, Ali became a 'safe', almost establishment figure, but his earlier legacy is the one that many remember.

If Ali's remark about the Vietcong is famous, probably the best-known image of this period is from the 1968 Olympics, when medal-winners Tommie Smith and John Carlos bowed their heads and raised their fists on the rostrum when the US anthem was played. As Zirin notes, they also wore no shoes (to protest against black poverty) and wore beads (to protest against lynching). They were stripped of their medals and sent home. Zirin interviews Carlos, who for some years had problems earning a living (his wife committed suicide in 1977).

Clearly it took some courage for these individuals (and many others less well known) to stand up for their beliefs, especially in the face of the general

conformity of American society. The same goes for those who support better treatment for gay and female athletes. Zirin reminds us that people can be bigoted in one way but not another: American footballer Reggie White spoke up against white supremacist groups and worked to help drug addicts and ex-convicts, yet he was appallingly homophobic, equating gays with child molesters.

And what of class? This gets relatively little look-in. Unsurprisingly, most owners of professional clubs are extremely wealthy, including George W Bush, former owner of the Texas Rangers baseball team. Professional sport is the tenth largest industry in the US. Aside from a few megabuck-earners, most athletes earn relatively little, and have a shorter life expectancy than average. Baseball players have a strong union, which helped to increase wages and has a reputation for not backing down.

Zirin ends with the reflection that sport could be more cooperative, without the cash incentive and the will to win at all costs, with far less distance between an average person and a star. But, as he says, 'This would require a completely different world.' While his book doesn't elaborate on this alternative, it should at least make you think a bit more about the role of sport under capitalism.

PB

Howard Zinn: A People's History of the United States. Harper Collins. \$18.95



Zinn as a bombardier in World War II

Originally published in 1980 and recently updated, this is the history you don't learn in schools. Zinn, a historian, playwright and social activist, set out to write this book after teaching and 'political

science' for 20 years, half of which time he was involved in the civil rights movement in the South.

Zinn chronicles the passage of time from the arrival of Columbus in 1492 up to and including the election of 2000, cramming each of the 25 chapters with indisputable evidence of man's inhumanity to man under capitalism and empire building. He spells out clearly how cleverly and craftily the ruling elite managed and manipulated their way to accumulating vast fortunes at the expense of the masses, be they indigenous Caribbean or North American Indians, black slaves or the mélange of European immigrants who became today's mostly white populace.

He exposes the lies and spin and self-interest from the time of the first president right through to the current incumbent. He shows how fear, suspicion and discrimination were deliberately harnessed as tools by those with power to set sections of the population against each other in order to pre-empt them joining forces against the real tyrants. The steady march of capitalism

and the two-party system, whilst promoting democracy and wealth for all, have their eyes set only on the twin goals of control at home and control of the world, i.e. democracy for none and wealth for a few.

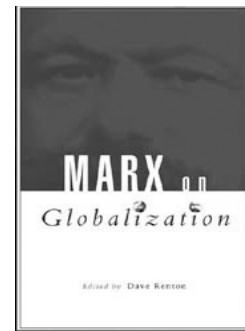
This book is in no way pessimistic; it is factual and points out numerous examples of individuals and groups who have refused to be denied. Zinn cites heartening stories of resistance, protest and refusal to accept the status quo; so many instances where people have demonstrated their opposition to the politics of empire and their support of 'people power'. In fact there is much useful 'ammunition' for proactive socialists here.

His final sentence of the final chapter, post-9/11, attacks, regarding the Declaration of Independence says, "Thus, the future of democracy depended on the people and their growing consciousness of what was the decent way to relate to their fellow human beings all over the world."

The signs are growing all over the world, the people are sick and tired of all forms of empire, the world is ripening for socialism. Let's be ready.

Janet Surman

Marx on Globalisation. Edited by David Renton. Lawrence and Wishart. £13.99.



This is a selection from the writings of Marx and Engels relevant to the global capitalism we are experiencing today, edited and selected by Dave Renton, who provides a short introduction to the whole work and one-page introductions to

each of the sections. Renton doesn't really put any of his own (Leninist) politics in his contributions to the book, which are kept to a minimum. The vast bulk is taken up with selections from works by Marx and Engels. There are extracts from the *Communist Manifesto*, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, *The Poverty of Philosophy* and *Capital*, as well as a few letters, unpublished drafts and pieces of journalism.

For the first section, on the world economy, Renton uses the 'Bourgeois and Proletarians' chapter of the *Communist Manifesto*. That Marx understood the long-term trends within capitalism to be global in nature can be illustrated by this well known excerpt: "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned . . . the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere". Marx and Engels were the first writers to understand that the capitalist society would spread and expand.

Marx and Engels didn't use the word 'globalisation', as the term is a recent invention. Though many globalisation

Film Review

Capitalism: No Magic Slipper

theorists argue that the world has now entered into a new economic era, Renton points out that "most commentators would agree that many of the processes being analysed today go back to the old international economy, which has been with us for some time. Such processes as world capitalism, market trade between regions, the growth of finance and new patterns of work, have been part of our life since 1840s, when Marx and Engels began to write". Despite changes and developments, from the nineteenth century to the 21st century, capitalism is still capitalism. In the introduction Renton uses the following quote from Eric Hobsbawm: "Marx and Engels did not describe the world as it had already been transformed by capitalism in 1848; they predicted how it was logically destined to be transformed by it".

The second section, on progress, includes a passage from Marx's *Capital* that describes the origins of the industrial capitalist. This is a good selection, as this is the part of this work that is the most accessible and in many ways the best starting point for anyone reading *Capital* (it has been said that it is best not to read *Capital* starting from the first chapter). This section also includes a speech by Marx from 1848 in which he expresses contempt for both backward-looking protectionism and supposedly progressive free trade (even though in the end he favours free trade but only because he sees it as hastening the contradictions of capital and so the social revolution). Pro-globalisation folk praise free trade and unfortunately many so-called anti-capitalists make the error of advocating some form of protectionism.

In the third section Renton asks whether Marx and Engels did actually believe in the inevitability of one pattern of economic development. In the 1840s they took their examples from Britain and it is often said that they believed the whole world would have followed that lead. But in a letter to Russian socialists Marx wrote that he did not believe that Russia had to follow the English model in forcing the peasants off the land as the first step towards industrialisation, as long as the social revolution had taken place in Europe. In that case, Marx mentioned the possibility of Russia bypassing capitalism and passing to socialism on the basis of the communistic peasant *mir*.

The section on Imperialism counters the argument of some modern globalisation theorists who argue that world capitalism will bring the third world up to the same level of development as the richest western countries.

Renton's book is a good selection of Marx and Engels work relating to the global capitalism of today and it serves well as an introduction to their thought. It would make a good read for someone new to Marx.

Gabriel

Correction

In the review of the books on fascism on page 15 of the August issue, we stated that Maxwell Knight later of MI5 had been director of intelligence of the "British Union of Fascists" in 1927. This should have read of the "British Fascists". The BUF, of course, did not exist at that time - *Editors*.

Make no mistake, *Cinderella Man* is a crackerjack movie which thoroughly justifies the praise lavished on it. The true story of Depression Era boxer James J. Braddock, who rose from the welfare rolls to winning the World Heavyweight Championship, thereby earning his nickname, "Cinderella Man", is totally absorbing and powerfully directed by Ron Howard.

Braddock's story was representative of his time. The movie begins in the late 1920s, when he lived in a nice suburban house and was a leading contender for a world title. It resumes when the Depression was at its worse in the early 30s and Braddock's career was at its lowest ebb, hence his standard of living too. As the Depression gradually recedes, we follow his rise to a shot at the title (at odds of 10-1) and victory over the seemingly unbeatable Max Baer, who was (dis)credited with two ring deaths.

Cinderella Man clearly depicts how tough times were in the early 30s, which doesn't mean it's a happy-go-lucky romp in Elysian Fields today. When Braddock's daughter asks for an extra slice of baloney, Braddock, who hasn't eaten that day, pretends he isn't hungry. When a guy comes to their tenement apartment to switch off the hydro, Mae Braddock (who is unable to pay the gas or milk bills either) attempts to dissuade him. He tells her, "I've got kids too. If I don't switch it off I'll lose my job." Mae and her three children tear the slats off a billboard, for fuel, risking trouble with the authorities.

Though his pride has sustained some fierce body blows, his spirit is unbroken. Braddock's strength comes from his closely-knit family and the belief in his capabilities by Joe Gould, who (unbeknownst to Braddock) sells his own furniture to pay Braddock's training expenses.

As we follow Braddock's new-found success it becomes clear this movie is about the indomitable human spirit. As Ron Howard said recently, "It's a film about people finding the strength to carry on and do the things they have to do." Most of us like to see the underdog triumph, most of us like to see a comeback, and here we have both, therefore, we can enjoy this film. Although it's perfectly OK to enjoy "Cinderella Man", it's not OK to be taken in by it. Sure it's a paean to the never-say-die, gotta give it my best shot feeling that exists in all of us. In that sense it's uplifting and a film in tune with the times we are living in, let alone the 1930s.

But on a deeper level the message of the movie is, "Hey, take it easy buddy, capitalism ain't so bad. Sure there are times when it's tough all over, but if you hang in tough and keep struggling like Jim and Mae Braddock did you'll find things'll work out just fine." This viewpoint was echoed by Russell Crowe on the David Letterman Show on June 8 and has become the main mantra of the media.

On the docks, Braddock befriends an ex-stockbroker who lost his job, mortgage and belief in politicians the day the market crashed. When Braddock suggests things

might improve now Roosevelt is president, his friend replies, "FDR hasn't got me my mortgage back."

In implying that we shouldn't trust politicians, they are saying the right thing for the wrong reason. Politicians of all kinds stand for a continuation of capitalism, a system that causes the conditions within which the Braddock family, like most families, struggled.

The pity of it all is that Braddock, like most members of the working class, didn't learn much, but continued to believe society didn't need changing. In 1928, a year before the Wall Street Crash, he lost \$20,000 when the Bank of the United States went belly-up. This was the year Herbert Hoover was elected president on the promise of continued prosperity. According to Mr. Hoover, "We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land."

Braddock, who was paid \$32,000 for beating Max Baer, eventually gained greater prosperity by a deal that was thoroughly in keeping with boxing's, hence capitalism's, shoddy ethics. When Joe Louis had emerged as the outstanding challenger, Joe Gould informed him he could sign ten percent of his earnings over the following ten years to Gould and Braddock, should he win, or forget about a title fight. Knowing he could be denied a title shot for years because he was black, Louis signed.

Braddock died in his sleep on November 30, 1974 at the age of 69. The next day in the *New York Times*, Red Smith wrote, "If death came easily, it was the only thing in his life that did."

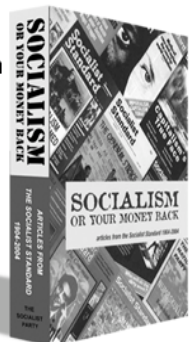
STEVE SHANNON

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LIVINGSTON BY-ELECTION

The Socialist Party stood a candidate in the Livingston by-election, in central Scotland, on 29 September, caused by the death of former "ethical" Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. As it took place while this issue was at the printers we are unable to report the result, but details of the campaign as it progressed and its outcome can be found on the by-election blog at <http://realsocialism.blogspot.com>

ADVANCE NOTICE: NEXT LONDON BRANCHES' CENTRAL MEETING

Saturday, 12 November, 13.30 to 17.00
THE HUMAN REVOLUTION
 Guest Speaker: Chris Knight (Professor of Anthropology, University of East London)
 Chair: Bill Martin (Socialist Party)
 Room 7, Friends House, 173 Euston Road, London NW1

A WALK IN RICHMOND PARK AND BY THE RIVER THAMES.

Meet at Richmond Station.
 Sunday **October 23rd 2005** at 11.00 am. For information contact:
 Vincent Otter on **07905 791638** or **020 8361 3017**
 or Richard Botterill on **01582 764929**

AUTUMN DELEGATE MEETING

Head Office, London SW4
 Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th
 October 2005

Discussions include:

- Delegated function within Party democracy
- Socialist analysis of terrorist bombing
- Does the war in Iraq change anything in the Party case?
- Implications for socialism of the end of the oil era
- The roots of irrational behaviour
- Can we afford a paid media officer?
- Should we establish a World Socialist Party of the European Union?

Manchester Branch Meeting

Monday **24 October**, 8 pm
 Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City Centre
'SCIENCE AND SOCIALISM'

Edmonton

Tuesday **18 October**
RUSSIA: AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT CHANGES
 Speaker: Vincent Otter
 Angel Community Centre, Raynham Road, N18

Norwich

Saturday **5 November**
 Welcome and informal chat for new visitors.
 1pm: Meal
 2pm: Discussion/possibility of forming an East Anglian branch
 3pm: Discussion of ADM items
 3.45-4pm: Recent and future activity
 The Conservatory, back room of The Rosary Tavern, Rosary Rd, Norwich

Fifty Years Ago

4½ PER CENT

No, this is not an article about the 4½ per cent. Bank Rate but about another item of 4½ per cent. that received almost no attention in the newspapers. It had to do with the Government's annual Blue Book on *National Income and Expenditure*, the latest issue, covering the years 1938-1954, being published the first week in September.

For readers who are unfamiliar with the subject matter the Blue Book is not easy to understand; and when not understood its tables of figures can be very misleading as is shown from time to time by Press comments on it. But some

of the tables tell us in precise terms and on official authority things that otherwise can only be conjectured on the basis of part information.

Our present comment is concerned only with the extent to which the "National Income" has increased and the way in which that increase has shown itself in every-day articles of consumption, the food, clothing, entertainment, etc., that concern us from day to day. [...]

It shows that, after allowing for price increase, the purchase of consumption goods (food, clothing, tobacco, rent, entertainment, travel, etc.), was in 1954 only 11 per cent. higher than in 1938. But as the Financial Times (6 September) pointed out, the population had grown by

6½ per cent., so that "real expenditure per head was 4½ per cent up." This, then, is the measure of what capitalism actually performs. When, therefore, the Tory Government, as an election manoeuvre, held out the promise of doubling the standard of living in the next 25 years they are counting on something happening in the future for which there is no support in the past.

(From editorial, *Socialist Standard*, October 1955)



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Thug in suede shoes

Anyone who feels a need to penetrate the Conservative mind should steel themselves to read the letters page of the Daily Telegraph, which is now in the throes of what might be called a debate about the respective appeals of the candidates for the party leadership. A most treasured recent example was a missive, apparently intended to wind up the discussion: "My mother told me never to trust a man who wore suede shoes. Does this advice still hold good?" It would not have needed a particularly sharp mind among the Tory activists to work out that this referred to Kenneth Clarke, who is infamous for, among other things (of which more later), wearing Hush Puppies in preference to the politicians' required footwear of sober, lace-up black shoes. Asked about this highly sensitive matter some years ago, Clarke responded in characteristic style: "The shoes are an act of defiance, because people began to be rude about them and if anything I began wearing suede shoes more often because I was getting advised to stop wearing them". He did not say whether he had also received advice to stop smoking large cigars and to do something about his rumpled clothes and his reputation, which he assiduously cultivates, as an arrogant and insensitive political thug. Rivals

Clarke was at Cambridge with a clutch of aspirant Tory politicians who developed into bitter rivals - Selwyn Gummer, Leon Brittan, Norman Lamont (who Clarke replaced, in the high spot of his career to date, as Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Michael Howard, who now stands between Clarke and the Tory leadership. Before getting into Parliament for Rushcliffe, Clarke fought two elections in the hopeless constituency of Mansfield. In keeping with his self-promoted image as someone who enjoyed a fight, after the first election he promised the Mansfield Tories that he would stay on to contest the seat again. The fact that he was more or less honour bound to do this did not prevent him casting about for another, safer seat. He tried for Edgbaston but the local party preferred Jill Knight; Clarke kept his two-timing a secret and posed as a man whose word was his bond.

When he got into the Commons he commenced an unusually smooth journey up the greasy pole, through minor jobs in the 1980s in the Department of Health, Minister for Employment, Secretary of State for Health, then for Education. He was promoted to Home Secretary in 1992 and, at his peak after the fall of Norman Lamont, Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1993 until the Tories were beaten in the 1997 election. At that time the British economy was emerging from the slump which had seen something like three million unemployed. Clarke's coincident period at the Treasury enabled him to claim to have designed the alleged economic recovery. This is a common ruse among Chancellors of the Exchequer: in a boom they claim the credit for the easier times while in a slump they blame pressures which were out of their control.

Bruiser

During all this time Clarke's aggressive and dismissive manner ensured that the enemies a politician normally accrues would in his case have a particular edge to their enmity. While he was at the Department of Health he riled the doctors with his plans to impose new contracts of employment on them; faced with their resistance he described them as "in the last resort a pretty ruthless lobby". In 1982 he dismissed the nurses' objections to NHS staff cuts with the sneer that "They are a trade union and they don't like the idea of their membership going down at all" (which is true about the Conservatives and any other capitalist party). He infuriated the ambulance crews (as well as substantial numbers of the voters) with his response to their claim for a rise in excess of the 6.5 per cent on offer: "The vast majority of ambulance staff...are professional drivers, a worthwhile job - but not

exceptional at all" (so who would anyone knocked down on the road prefer to see coming to help them - an ambulance crew or Kenneth Clarke?). This arrogance was too much for even the normally supportive Daily Express: "Whatever happened to caring Ken? Instead of the matey, jolly fellow once known to colleagues and public we now have a truculent, bad-tempered bully". Thatcher was no more help to her beleaguered minister; at Prime Minister's Question Time she pointedly avoided agreeing with Clarke about the ambulance crews.

The teachers were another group to fall victim to Clarke's aggression. The changes in schooling introduced by Kenneth Baker in 1998, which had resulted in schools being swamped with minutely detailed instructions on what they should teach, how they should teach it and how they should report on it, had provoked years of hostility between them and the government. To call the situation chaotic hardly did it justice. Clarke arrived at the Department of Education to restore some sort of order, which he started to do in a manner customary to someone described by Thatcher when she moved him to Education, as "an energetic and persuasive bruiser, very useful in a brawl or an election". But Clarke's lack of finesse undid him; in a magazine interview, subsequently picked up by the Daily Mirror, he said that private schools provided a higher standard of education than state schools. Reminded of this comment in a Commons debate by Jack Straw, Clarke intervened with the opinion that the Mirror was a newspaper "read by morons". The Mirror's response was immediate and crushing. "That's two fingers to 8,230,000 voters, Minister" it bellowed and the day after that it ran a telephone poll to establish how its readers rated their Minister of Education - was he a prat or a moron? "Kenneth Clarke was voted a total PRAT last night as 59,000 Daily Mirror readers took part in one of the most fiercely fought elections for years" it crowed, with an unflattering photograph of Clarke as a bully who smoked too much and, at 16st. 9lbs, was unhealthily obese.

Sneers

Michael Heseltine said of Clarke: "He is what he is. You get what you see. And people like that." But what people do not "like" is a politician who rubbishes genuine problems or who regards truth as something to be fashioned in accordance with their needs at any time. In 1980 the American pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly launched a new wonder drug - Opren - on the market, claiming that among a clutch of beneficial effects it could reduce arthritis pain. In fact Opren had serious side effects such as liver jaundice, kidney damage and excessive sensitivity to sunlight. There were 76 deaths attributed to the drug, which was later suspended by the Committee on Safety of Medicines. At the time Clarke was Minister for Health. His reaction to the suffering caused by Opren was to sneer that it was "no more than the patients becoming lobstered". After their crushing defeat in 1997, the Tory party set about electing a new leader. Clarke knew that his views on many issues, especially Europe, would not endear him to the party faithful. (The Daily Telegraph damned him as "the candidate of the past"). In an effort to attract the votes of the right wing, anti-

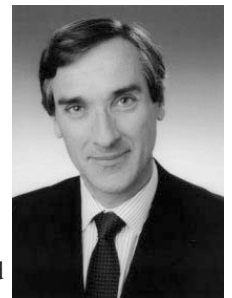


"A truculent, bad-tempered bully" - Daily Express

Europe membership Clarke cobbled up a partnership with the weird Eurosceptic John Redwood - a U-turn too cynical for even the most hardened Tory MP. Now he is again bending what he calls his principles, saying that Europe is not now on the agenda and that his enthusiasm for it is "no longer as constant as the North Star".

Politicians, like salespeople, come in many shapes and styles. Some are reticent and conciliatory. Others are brash, brutal and noisy. Nobody should be impressed by Kenneth Clarke's pose as the man for the people - matey, frank, reliable and human, if engagingly boozy. He has shown himself to be as calculating and dishonest as all the others. There is no more to be hoped for from him, the candidate of the past, than there is from those of the future. ■

IVAN



Redwood - weird



Voice from the Back

The US Is Staying Indefinitely

"The Air Force's top general said Monday that American warplanes would have to support Iraq's fledgling security forces well after American ground troops eventually

Not leaving on a jet plane - the US in Iraq



withdraw from the country.... In an interview earlier this month, General Jumper was even more explicit when asked about the Air Force's future in Iraq. "We will continue with a rotational presence of some type in that area more or less indefinitely", he said. "We have interests in that part of the world and an interest in staying in touch with the militaries over there" (*New York Times*, 30 August). The "interest" they have, is of course, Iraq's oil.

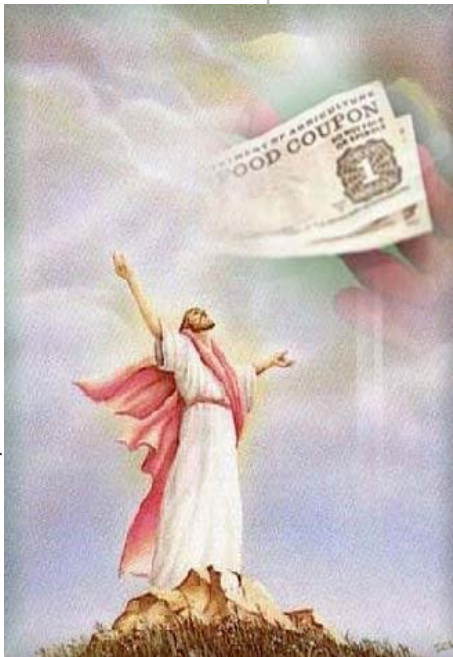
Blessed Are The Warmakers

When the priests and ministers in the USA prattle on about "blessed are the peacemakers" they obviously don't know much about how capitalism operates. "The United States is the largest supplier of weapons to developing nations, a US congressional study says. It delivered more than \$US 9.6 billion in arms to

countries including those in the Near East and Asia in 2004, and boosted worldwide sales to the highest amount since 2000. The total worldwide value of all agreements to sell arms last year was close to \$US 37 billion, and nearly 59 per cent of the agreements were with developing nations, according to the Congressional Research Service report" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 August).

Blessed are the Poor?

Another piece of nonsense much favoured by the bible bashers is "blessed are the poor". Good news then for the pious in the USA according to the latest figures. "The number of Americans living below the poverty line rose for the fourth successive year during 2004, extending the gap between rich and poor in the world's wealthiest nation. At the other end of the scale, a survey of the biggest US companies by compensation consultancy Pearl Meyers found the average payout for chief executives rose 13% in 2004 to \$10.5 million." (*Guardian*, 31 August). You are living in New York on minimum wage? Oh, blessed one! Consult the US Bureau of Statistics.



The Doom Machine

We often hear scares about the likely effects of global warming, but this report seems to come from a reliable source and should scare us all. "Only extraordinary changes in the output of warming gases now and until 2050 would make any difference, Martin Parry told the British Association science festival. The estimates came from a government-funded study by Professor Parry's team at the Hadley Centre, the Met Office's climates forecasting centre" (*Times*, 6 September). The report was carried under the

headline "Ozone rise will doom millions to starvation" and calculated that about 500 million are at risk but by 2050 this would rise to 550 million. Truly, modern capitalism has become a doom machine!

Priorities

"The world's poorest people are being denied access to drugs because pharmaceutical companies are focusing their resources on diseases suffered by wealthy, middle-aged Americans, such as obesity and heart disease, a leading expert will say tomorrow. Dr David Rhodes, the Health Protection Agency's (HPA) head of business development will claim that spiralling costs are driving firms to invest primarily in drugs that tackle diseases of older Americans" (*Observer*, 11 September). This is good business practice according to the ethics of capitalism, a bit tough on those suffering from tuberculosis, malaria and water-borne diseases in the less developed countries, though.

A World In Crisis

The columnist Lee Randall certainly summed up the nightmare of capitalism well when she wrote: "Twirl the globe and stab your finger anywhere. I could spend whole days writing cheques for innocent victims of war, natural disasters, terrorism,



disease or poverty, and it wouldn't be enough. Every tomorrow brings new woes. I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling overwhelmed, uncertain about what can and should be done. But I'm open to ideas" (*Scotsman*, 10 September). How about world socialism, Lee?

Free lunch

by Rigg



Socialist Standard



November 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1215 £1

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The Age of Treason



400 Years after Guy Fawkes,
a capital charge comes to life.



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Adam Buick asks how humans can be persuaded to commit themselves to what most people can see is a delusion.

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With the world organised the way it is we couldn't live without money. But what if the world was organised differently? Paul Bennett investigates.

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Capitalism, with its globalisation and its tendency to make everything homogeneous, is killing off languages. Does it matter?

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David Blunkett thinks the incapacity benefit is mad. The 2.7 million people on it may disagree.

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"Having respect for people and our environment - acknowledging and caring for each other's strengths, needs, weaknesses, ambitions - is not compatible with capitalism's competitive, repressive nature"

Greasy Pole, page 19

Forget, forget the 5th of November - and Trafalgar Day

The only man to enter Parliament with good intentions". So some describe Guy Fawkes, though this isn't the official line on the Gunpowder Plot which was uncovered four hundred years ago this month. Actually, this saying is wrong on two counts. Guy Fawkes did not enter Parliament with good intentions, and to wish to blow up Parliament can't really be said to be a good intention (blowing them up wouldn't achieve anything; voting them out is the intelligent thing to do).

Four hundred years ago the English ruling class was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Spain which, with the backing of the Pope, was trying to incorporate England into a revived Holy Roman Empire. Capitalism had only come into being in the previous hundred years or so and the English ruling class was in the process of transforming itself from a serf-exploiting feudal nobility into a class whose wealth and power would be based on producing for and trading on the world market. To achieve this it was essential to avoiding being incorporated to an economically stagnant Absolutist Empire such as Spain was trying to establish in Europe.

The ideological smokescreen under which this conflict of economic interest was fought out was Protestantism versus Catholicism. Henry VIII had broken with the Pope in 1529 and Protestantism became the ideology of that section of the English ruling class striving for a national capitalist state. Catholicism that of its enemies. Throughout the 16th century in England, Catholics and Protestants were successively burned at the stake. Guy Fawkes was a Catholic and had entered Parliament with a view to blowing it up in a bid to re-establish a Catholic regime in England.

From the point of view of the English ruling class, he was a traitor, and has traditionally been portrayed as such in school history books. In fact, anti-Catholicism remained a key feature of

English nationalism right up until the end of the 19th century. By then it had become an anachronism. England - since the union with Scotland in 1707, "Great Britain" - had long since established itself as the leading capitalist power in the world and was no longer under even the remotest threat of being incorporated into some backward-looking Absolutist Catholic Empire.

In view of the anti-Catholic aspect the media didn't know quite how to mark the 400th anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot.



Fawkes

They had no such doubts about how to mark the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar - by an obscene display of jingoistic nationalism.

The ground had already been prepared by London's successful bid to stage the 2012 Olympics and England's regaining of the Ashes from Australia, both of which saw a mindless mob gather in Trafalgar Square to sing jingo songs known to socialists as "Fool Britannia", "Land of Dopes and Tories", "God Save the Queen (and all who sail in her)" as well as - though quite it's out of place - Blake's "Jerusalem".

Socialists are utterly opposed to such manifestations of nationalism. In fact, we find disturbing the revival of nationalism in Britain in recent decades, as seen in the acceptance into the mainstream of things

which once had fascist connotations such as the term "Briton" and the flag of St. George. At one time, British patriots used to call on people to die for their "country", i.e. for the state which for accidental historical reasons happened to have jurisdiction over the geographical area where they lived. Nowadays, the appeal is to the "nation", i.e. to an imaginary community. But there never can be any real community under capitalism. A "nation" is a false community, and a dangerous illusion because of its divisive nature.

Britain, like every other country or state in the world, is class-divided: a minority of rich owners and the rest of us. We have no interests in common with them and anything which encourages the illusion that all the people of Britain form a community with a common interest can only serve their interests. They need us to believe this because their rule and privileges depend on our acceptance. They are few but we are many. They know this but most of us don't, yet.

When we do then we will see that the only community possible today, given the integration of the world economy, is a world community. But to be a real community there must be no class division. There must be common ownership of the globe's resources so that they can be used for the benefit of all the members of the human race. We will then recognise ourselves, not as British, French, American, Australian or any of the other labels our rulers impose on us, but as members of the human race, citizens of the world, Earthpeople. Then the sort of narrow-minded nationalism orchestrated on Trafalgar Day - and let's hope it's not going to become an annual event - will be looked back on with a shudder as a manifestation of a barbarous past when ruling classes incited people to regard themselves as members of rival, competing "nations". ■

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Bird flu: how capitalism could make it worse.



Nature can sometimes do worse things than capitalism. An earthquake kills 40,000 in a few minutes. A tsunami wipes out 200,000 in hours. And now the Department of Health contingency plan for bird flu in Britain is contemplating a 'not impossible' 750,000 deaths if the H5N1 virus goes pandemic. The government is buying up 14m doses of Tamiflu, a general-purpose antiviral and probably not very effective prophylaxis against a virus strain that hasn't evolved yet, which in any case won't be available until April next year and is only enough to treat 25% of the UK population. Meanwhile the United Nations is facing wildly varying estimates of the death toll, from 150m from its own advisors to a paltry 7.4m from the WHO, while newspapers range from tabloid 'We're all doomed' sensationalism to an 'It'll be all right on the night' conservatism from the better informed but possibly more complacent qualities.

A pandemic may well be on the way. The government Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, has announced his estimate of 50,000 'excess' deaths (over and above the average annual death rate of 12,000 each flu season), stating: "We can't make this pandemic go away, because it is a natural phenomenon, it will come." However, other scientists dismiss the figure of 50,000 as a complete guess. "It could be worse, it could be better. I think initially it could be worse than that", says Dr Martin Wiselka, consultant in infectious diseases at Leicester Royal Infirmary (*BBC News Online*, Oct 16).

The problem is that everybody is guessing, and governments are not willing to spend money on hunches. Currently H5N1 has an exceptionally high mortality rate of 50%, but is very hard to transmit, especially from one human to another, which is why only 60 people worldwide have so far died. The current guess is that the most likely threat is from H5N1 recombining with ordinary flu during the annual winter flu season. This is known to have happened during the Spanish flu outbreaks of 1957 and 1968, when the hybrid strain was much less deadly but spread very rapidly and thus killed more people. On the basis of this guess, a best-case scenario, the government plans to rely on its standard seasonal vaccination programme for at-risk groups including children, old people and asthmatics, with the additional purchase of the Tamiflu antiviral drug just in case. However, new research is showing that the 1918 pandemic, the deadliest ever recorded, which killed between 20 and 40 million people, was a pure bird flu, not a hybrid, and that H5N1 is evolving in ominously similar ways. The 1918 virus infected almost everyone on the planet within a year of its appearance, and without the aid of modern transport and cheap mobility (*New Scientist*, October 8). Donaldson dismisses comparison with the 1918 pandemic because antiviral drugs and other advanced medical practices were not available then, yet many scientists are worried that the disease could spread so rapidly that it will outrun any attempt



to contain it, and the government in any case has rejected plans to curtail population movement as largely pointless.

Capitalism is no more to blame for bird flu than for the recent earthquake in Kashmir; however, it can be criticised for its way of dealing with natural disasters and threats. In capitalism, whatever the urgency, nothing can happen until agreement has been reached over money. As one example, the EU is currently unable to spend any money on purchasing vaccines and antiviral drugs because, according to officials, Britain is blocking agreement on the overall EU budget for 2007 to 2013 (*Guardian*, Oct 15). In another less publicised example, scientists have expressed horror that the team which has recreated the 1918 virus, 'one of the deadliest viruses of all time' have been testing it in live mice at only the second highest level of containment, and without wearing protective suits. The obvious question, when it is known that Soviet scientists in the 70's accidentally released a mild member of the 1918 family of viruses into the environment, is: why not the highest level of containment? The answer can only be cost. If there is a chance to keep cost down, even if it involves a risk, capitalism will exert pressure to take that chance. It would be an incredible irony if H5N1 turned out to be a case of mild sniffles but we all died anyway from an artificially recreated laboratory virus because somebody tried to save a few quid from their research budget.

It could also be argued that capitalism's peculiar and illogical ways of working can conspire to make a deadly pandemic more rather than less likely. The secrecy of the Chinese state-capitalist regime has already held back study on H5N1 as, like the SARS epidemic before it, China has refused to allow researchers access to samples or to reveal actual mortality statistics. Then there is the incentive for poultry farmers to allow isolated cases of flu to go unreported rather than see their entire stocks destroyed, as has happened in South East Asia, where billions of birds have been culled. The manufacture of an effective antiviral drug, once the infectious strain has been identified, would be enormously accelerated if the drug company making it were to provide the details to other drug companies, but in view of the money to be made by not doing so, we may not be able to rely on such public spirited cooperation. And if the worst happens, and governments give out the useless advice to stay indoors and not travel, how are workers supposed to make a living? Will bosses look kindly on any worker who takes a day off sick every time she sneezes or her kids have a temperature? Will banks look kindly on businesses that curtail activity because of staff absences? Will capitalism look favourably on anyone who falters in their perpetual and relentless pursuit of money because of an altruistic concern for social health and welfare, or will it instead reward those who have no such concerns?

Capitalist governments are gambling that H5N1 won't mutate to humans, or that if it does mutate to humans, it won't be deadly, or that if it is deadly, it won't spread fast, or that if it spreads fast, it will be treatable with an antiviral, or that if no antiviral can be developed in time, that it won't kill anyone rich or important. Workers, as so often in wartime, appear in this calculation in the section at the end, under the heading 'expendable assets'. We're just not worth spending too much money on, provided some of us survive to keep working.

Diseases among social animals are common, and since the agricultural revolution brought humans into close and sustained contact with other social or herd animals, we have acquired many of their diseases (over sixty from dogs, for instance). Many of these now harmless childhood diseases started life as epidemics that brought empires to their knees and destroyed civilizations. A new virus strain unleashed on a virgin population is a more terrible event than any volcano, any earthquake or any tsunami, and yet capitalism is content to gamble that it won't happen, just as it did over the tsunami, or that it won't be that serious, just as it's doing over global warming. Capitalism is always gambling with our lives in this way, without giving us any say at all. If the gamble comes off, the rich win. If it doesn't, we die.

Nature can sometimes do worse things than capitalism. But to fight them and protect ourselves, we need something better than capitalism.

Animal testing

Dear Editors,
I am pleased to see you state [October issue] that the abolition of the savagery of capitalism will undoubtedly do its part to abolish all unnecessary suffering by non-human sentient creatures. Yet you say that the socialist approach to animal testing is pragmatic. What suffering is necessary? On what grounds? How many animal deaths equal one human life?

Animal testing is anything but scientific. Thalidomide tested safe on animals but when given to humans was a disaster. Drugs for arthritis were harmless to animals but proved to greatly increase heart attacks in people. Blue sky testing where animals are harmed and killed in the vague hope that something useful, and profitable, to humans is both daft and cruel.

I hope a socialist world would be more compassionate with people trying to live in harmony with the environment and animals rather than seeing them as assets to be exploited and plundered for the financial gain of vivisectionists and drug monopolies. Socialism should abolish these as well as the many other horrors of capitalism.

I am sure there are many people suffering from ailments capitalism can't cure right now (I would be one) who would volunteer to try new drugs and thereby save animal lives while perhaps improving the quality of their own.

TERRY LIDDLE, London, SE9

'Health' system

Dear Editors,
I become annoyed when I hear of the increasing numbers of retired workers (hence unexploitable) who are being reminded by their GPs that their ailments are age-related and are told "what do you expect at your age?" instead of being offered proper care. Precious 'health care' is then devoted to those that capitalism is able to continue to exploit.

But can multi-million profiteers in drug companies be trusted to be more interested in population health than the profit to be made? Who is able to double-check their laboratory tests and results and how can study statistics be guaranteed not to have been exaggerated or distorted? With such vast wealth at stake would even a capitalist government really care about working-class health under such rewarding (for them) conditions? It has to be faced that no capitalist government assists the really needy - that task is left for charities to do and prop up a system that benefits only the wealthy ruling class.

If the health system is unable or unwilling to properly test and cure working-class patients then I personally believe being ignored and left to suffer or being officially kept alive to suffer is not good enough. The obvious third option of being allowed access and advice on how to quickly and efficiently terminate life should be made available.

The utter independence and freedom to choose the time and place of my own demise certainly appeals to me and is a right I am keen on exercising. If you can

help out with attractive suggestions on how this can be accomplished it would be appreciated and I can depart - when the time comes - thumbing my nose at officialdom who have dictated in life what I can and cannot do. It would be a great way to go!

RON STONE, Gelorup, Australia

Blinkered Nationalist

Why on earth are you standing in a Scottish seat? Smacks a little of imperialism to people up here. "Great Britain" is a state founded for empire - the centre colonising the island - it is outdated so anyone with the slightest knowledge of politics now sees "Great Britain" as outdated, hence supporting independence. You are the only party with "Britain" in the title apart from the BNP!

ANON, Livingston, Scotland

Reply: As far as we are concerned, "Great Britain" is merely a geographical name. And we were the only party standing in the Livingston by-election without "Scottish" on the ballot paper - that's because we don't stand for an independent Scotland any more than we stand for an independent "Great Britain" or even "Little England". We stand for world socialism, a world community, without frontiers, where the resources of the Earth, industrial and natural, will have become the common heritage of all humanity - Editors.

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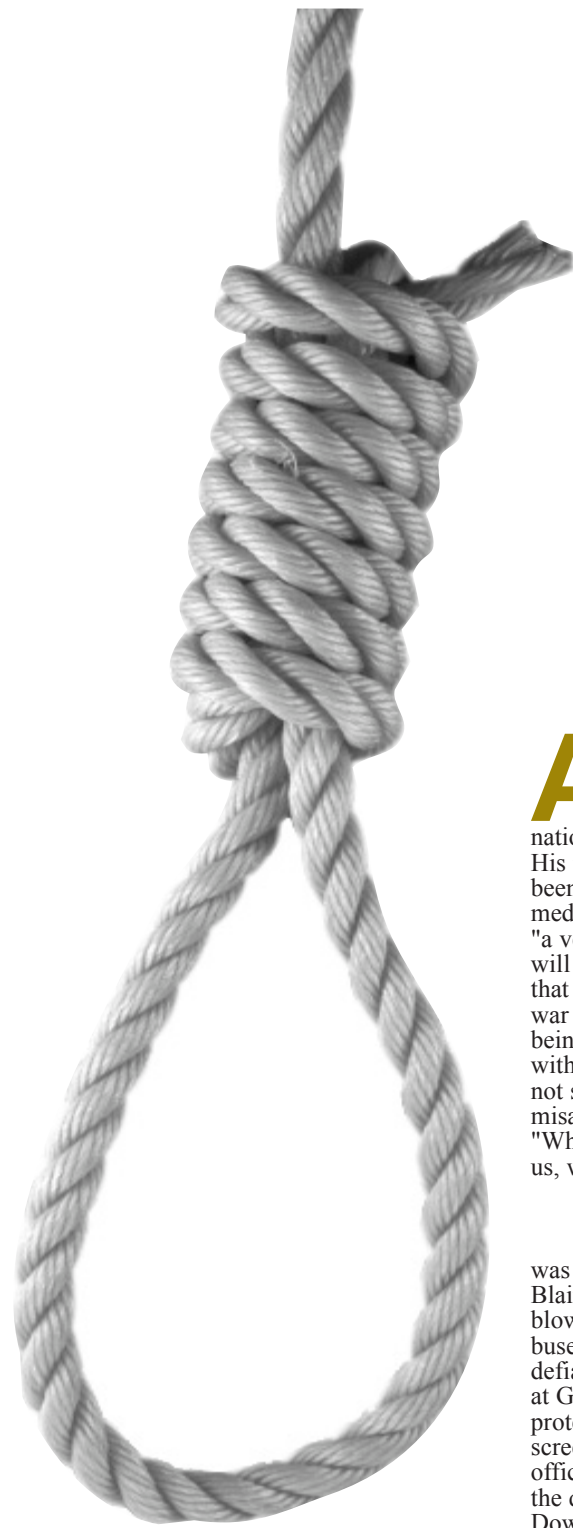
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If this be Treason...

As soon as he could after the bombs went off in London on 7 July Tony Blair came on the TV to address the nation, as is expected of all great national leaders at times of crisis and danger. His message, in the sense that it had already been largely worked out for him by the media, was unexceptional. "This is" he said, "a very sad day for the British people but we will hold true to our way of life". Whether that "way of life" was represented by waging war on a country on the basis of lies about it being an immediate threat to world safety with its massively powerful weapons he did not say. But in case there were any lingering misapprehensions about it he plunged on: "When they [the bombers] try to intimidate us, we will not be intimidated".

Protection

This use of the words "us" and "we" was designed to create the impression that Blair was facing the same dangers, of being blown to pieces on the London Tube or buses, as the rest of us. In fact he made his defiant speech on a brief break from the G8 at Gleneagles, where the participants were protected by a high, impenetrable metal screen backed up by a few thousand police officers. When, back in London, he travels the quarter mile or so between his home in Downing Street and his workplace in the Houses of Parliament he does not face the same risks as working Londoners because he is whisked on his journey in a bullet-proof car, among a swarm of police on motor bikes, through streets which have been swept clear of other people. By most reasonable standards anyone who behaves in that way can be described as "intimidated". Not that Blair lives by the same standards as the rest of us, who are merely expendable members of the working class.

But after his intimidated bravado Blair had to give some attention to tracking down the bombers' organisation and being seen to be actively working against another such incident. During this it leaked out that in future our "way of life" may be subject to the decisions of secret "anti-terror" courts, ruled over by "security cleared" judges with the accused being represented by "special advocates" who had also been vetted for "security". Other news revealed that some of the defendants before such courts, if British subjects, may find themselves charged with

the offence of treason. It seemed fairly obvious that these proposed changes, in the panic after 7 July, were designed to induce a retributive thrill among those whose enjoyment of our way of life made them grateful for the protection of such a stoutly unintimidated government.

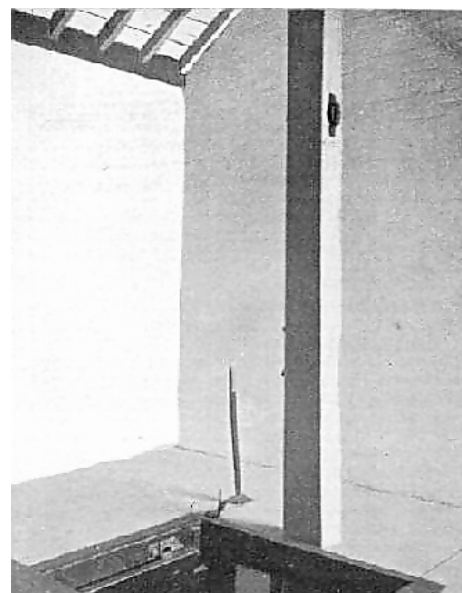
Treason

Treason is defined as a violation or betrayal of allegiance which is owed to a sovereign or a country, usually through joining, or giving support to, enemy in a war or attempting to overthrow the government. This definition is more comprehensive and more complex than it may at first seem to be. There have been cases when the person accused of treason has argued that they were not of the alleged nationality and so did not owe allegiance to that country or its sovereign. Anyone who regards the world's population as a mass of human beings may marvel at capitalism's need to disastrously complicate what are essentially simple matters - for which many a lawyer is grateful. It may be taken as an example of this that of the four categories of treason remaining from the Treason Act of 1351 there is still the offence of "violating" the wife of the king's eldest son, which may have caused some lost sleep among the men who consorted with Princess Diana while she was still married to the Prince of Wales.

For a long time treason was a capital offence and to satisfy the thirst of the population to witness that traitors had got their just deserts the sentence was often to be hung, drawn and quartered in public. (In fact this sentence was not formally abolished until 1947 - one of the reforms for which the Attlee government did not, for some reason, claim any credit.) After capital punishment was abolished in 1965 treason remained as one of the few offences which could still "attract" (as lawyers are fond of putting it) the death penalty. Wandsworth prison in London, just in case anyone was in need of being hanged, kept a scaffold in good working order.

Casement

One of the more famous examples of treason trials, which came to its appointed grisly end on the scaffold in 1916, was that of Roger Casement. He was an Irish man who at the turn of the century had been



From left: Roger Casement, William Joyce and Wandsworth prison gallows

employed as a consul of the British government in what was then the Belgian Congo. There he was appalled by the slave conditions and the butchery imposed on the Congolese people by the Belgian rubber companies, under the authority of King Leopold II. Casement's character was summed up by his manager, who complained that "He is very good to the natives, too good, too generous, too ready to give away. He would never make money as a trader". He retired in 1911, with a knighthood and a British government pension and two years later he returned to live in Ireland where, not entirely justifiably, he drew parallels between what he had seen in the Congo and Irish problems. In the cause of Irish nationalism he helped to form the Irish Volunteers, an armed militia.

When the First World War began he advised Irish men against joining the British Army, on the grounds that the war with Germany was no concern of theirs. On a false passport he went to Germany with the intention of persuading Irish prisoners of war to fight against Britain. This was not as welcome as he might have hoped; the Germans found him an embarrassment and hastily shipped him, in a submarine, back to Ireland where he was quickly captured. At his trial he tried to argue that he was an Irishman, a case which was fatally weakened in law by his accepting employment as a British consul, a knighthood and a pension. He was quickly convicted and executed at Pentonville on 3 August 1916. After his death his diaries came to light, providing evidence that he was not only a traitor but also a homosexual, which was enough to provoke popular satisfaction that it was entirely appropriate to do away with him. It was not a time notable for rational assessment of such issues.

Joyce

There were similarities between that case and of William Joyce, whose broadcasts from Germany during the Second World War eventually earned him the name of Lord Haw Haw and a death sentence at the Old Bailey. Joyce was accustomed to dazzling people with his somewhat undisciplined knowledge and his oratory. Organisations found it difficult to

cope with him and he had to leave the Army, the Conservative Party and then the British Union of Fascists. All of this was expressed in his virulent anti-semitism; typical of his descriptions of Jews was as "submen with prehensile toes". But for this he might have done well in the Tory Party (he was once close to being their parliamentary candidate in Chelsea) and in the BUF he held a position only a little below that of Oswald Mosley. Joyce was ejected from the BUF in what Mosley described as an economy drive; he went on to form the National Socialist League, which was closer to the Nazis (their meetings ended with shouts of "Sieg Heil") but the NSL never made any headway and was about to be wound up when Joyce went to Germany just before the start of the war.

Although there is little evidence that Joyce's broadcasts had any significant effect on the war morale in Britain, he did provoke a kind of bemused fascination and became the stuff of myths and rumours. At all events his pro-German activities were enough to ensure that when the war ended he would be arrested and brought to England to be tried for treason. Anticipating by some 60 years the Blair government's manipulation of the legal system, Parliament rushed through the Treason Act of 1945, which replaced the elaborate and prolonged trial procedure which had been in force in cases of treason with a simpler and brisker style, similar to that of a murder trial.

It soon emerged that Joyce had a serious defence against the charge. He had been born in the USA of Irish parents who had become naturalised Americans in 1894. But as a young man he had come to England and had applied for a British passport by lying about his place of birth. His defence argued that, however he had described himself, he was in fact not British but the prosecutor - handsome, brilliant Hartley Shawcross, Attorney General in the 1945 Labour government - persuaded the jury, with a little help from the judge, that "common sense" should override procedure. The long queues which had formed overnight to witness Joyce's trial were hungry for a guilty verdict and it took the jury only 23 minutes to agree. A little over three months later Joyce, having exhausted all the avenues of appeal, was executed at

Wandsworth prison. Popular revenge had been satisfied.

Class and Patriotism

Among his admirers Joyce had a reputation as a relentlessly logical thinker. It was a strange kind of logic which accommodated his support of Germany's war effort against Britain with his rabid British nationalism. ("The white cliffs of Dover! God bless old England on the lea" he exclaimed to his guard when he was being flown across the Channel to his trial). At the end he tried to escape the hangman by claiming to be an "alien", which was the kind of accusation he was accustomed to make, in suitably contemptuous invective, about Jewish people. There was - and still is - nothing exceptional about such inconsistencies, which expose the fallacy of patriotism, with its essential creed of "my country right or wrong". Workers, who make up the majority of capitalism's people, have no country; however the system arbitrarily divides them according to ruling class rivalries, the workers are united in their poverty. For example it was not a coincidence that the number of victims of recent disasters such as the Asian tsunami and the Katrina hurricane was clearly related to the degree of their poverty. If you could afford it you got out in time; if you could not afford it.

That its workers should be patriotic is vital to each national ruling class and this, fertilised by official lies, is exploited by all governments. Following the 7 July bombs in London one politician after another rushed to denounce the bombers for killing innocent people, as if the British and American forces in Iraq were not also doing that, on a much larger scale. The response of the Blair government was very much as we have come to expect - distortions of facts, the creation of new offences and the revival of the treason charge, designed to stimulate a panic under cover of which the politicians could feel free to do what they would. The strategy in all this was to cement the workers' patriotism, their loyalty to British capitalism. But as the smoke of the bombs cleared and the dead were counted the central fact remained that for workers to accept such a weary, discredited case is treason against their class. ■

IVAN



For years, the Left in Britain and elsewhere, have sung the praises of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, ready always to defend the "gains" of the Cuban revolution as that country withstood everything the US had to throw at it. Now there is a new revolutionary on the block, cast in the Castro mould, flicking the V's at Western imperialists as he implements social reform after social reform and, like Castro, winning the applause of radicals around the world.

Hugo Chavez: revolutionary socialist or leftwing reformist?

His name is Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, and he is the mastermind of the country's "socialist" revolution, presenting the "threat of the good example" that continues to panic the USA.

It is understandable why the left love him when he is regularly heard mouthing slogans and making the kind of demands you normally see in

papers like Socialist Worker. Addressing the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, earlier this year Chavez said:

"It is impossible, within the framework of the capitalist system to solve the grave problems of poverty of the majority of the world's population. We must transcend capitalism. But we cannot resort to state capitalism, which would be the same perversion of the

Soviet Union. We must reclaim socialism as a thesis, a project and a path, a new type of socialism, a humanist one, which puts humans and not machines or the state ahead of everything. That's the debate we must promote around the world, and the WSF is a good place to do it."

By all accounts, Chavez was not inebriated or stoned when he made this statement. He was sober and deadly serious. He had never talked about much socialism before, only about being a "Bolivarian", a humanist and a supporter of the Cuban revolution. But now he bandies the word "socialism" around with the glee of a five year old learning a new schoolyard profanity, and regularly mentions Marx, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg.

"Socialism" is the buzzword of Venezuela's "Bolivarian Revolution" (so called after Simon Bolivar who led the army that freed Venezuela from Spanish rule). It is a word Chavez is keen to expunge of what he sees as its negative connotations, namely state capitalism - despite the fact that he seems unclear just what is meant by the term. Speaking recently to senior heads of the country's military, Chavez asked that they carry the question of socialism "into the barracks", to initiate debate and to reassess everything they had hitherto been told about socialism and to help strengthen the ideological offensive.

In the TV programme *Alo Presidente*, broadcast on 1 September, he pleaded for Venezuelans to "leave to one side the ghosts with which the idea of socialism has been associated" and revealed the result of an independent opinion poll carried out in May and

June. He informed his country that 47.9 percent said they preferred a 'socialist government', that 25.7 percent said they preferred a capitalist government and that some 25 percent were yet to respond.

Since Hugo Chavez declared that the way forward for Venezuela was to steer towards socialism, this has turned into the main debate within the "revolutionary Bolivarian" movement, and

society generally

Reforms

Chavez's heart may be in the right place, even if he is somewhat muddled as to the meaning of the word "socialism," and he may well have decent intentions. But his "socialist" agenda amounts to little more than one vast reformist programme that is largely being financed by the country's oil, which is currently selling for five times its 1999 price.

The generous profits from oil price rises have gone into financing programmes to improve health, provide cheap food, extend educational access, and to organise some land reform. Chavez has initiated operations aimed at ending poverty and improving the economic and cultural lives of Venezuelans. He is keen on educating the population via literacy drives. He is re-nationalising universities and building new housing. The state has taken over some sections of industry and a TV station has been set up to transmit the "socialist" ideas of the Bolivarian "revolution".

While Chavez faces a lot of opposition in urban centres, it is clear why, in the poor working class shanties surrounding the city, support for the government is vocal and widespread.

Cooperatives

Chavez, is also keen on workers' cooperatives. In his 1 September TV broadcast he pointed out that the kind of cooperative he is proposing is one that "generates collective wealth through joint labour, going beyond the capitalist model which promotes individualism". If company owners found the going difficult, he said, the state was prepared to come to their aid with low interest credit, though on the understanding that "the employers give workers participation in management, the direction and the profits of the company." And which capitalist could resist that offer? Chavez observed that 700 closed companies had been identified with a view to expropriation; that many had assets and the machinery ready to start producing.

Expropriation comes at a cost to worker organisation however. The first company to be taken over was the paper mill Venepal, now renamed Invepal. There, union leaders broke up the union - against the better advice of others in the trade union movement - and now look forward to buying out the state's stake in the company so they will have sole control over

company and profits. Overnight, former militant trade unionists have turned into aspiring capitalists.

As far as the US is concerned with Venezuela, the "good example" that the "Bolivarian revolution" poses is the least of their problems at the moment. The real concern stems from the fact that Venezuela has considerable oil wealth. Venezuela is the fifth largest oil exporter in the world - 13 per cent of the world's oil comes out of the country - and Chavez controls the largest oil supplies outside of the Middle East.

At a time of rising oil prices, instability in the Middle East, and with China emerging as a major challenge to US economic interests in the near future, Chavez earlier this year signed an agreement with China's vice president Zeng Qinghong, smoothing the way for the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation to invest in the development of Venezuelan oil and gas reserves. Chavez further agreed to sell fuel and crude oil to China at reduced prices to compensate the high shipping costs of oil to East Asia.

Moreover, Caracas recently signed up to a much publicized agreement for a group of sales reps from the Venezuelan state oil company to be trained by

return Cuba has sent an army of professionals to Venezuela to help the ongoing social programmes, inclusive of 14,000 doctors, 3,000 dentists, 1,500 eye specialists and 7,000 sports trainers.

And then there are Venezuela's recent arms purchases - 40 helicopters from Russia, attack light aircraft and 100,000 Kalashnikovs from Brazil - which will no doubt provide the Bush regime with the excuse to channel still more weaponry to neighbouring Colombia, escalating regional tension and the likelihood of future instability.

Little wonder the US is becoming a mite anxious at the ongoing antics of the Latin American upstart Chavez. And just to make matters a little more precarious, Chavez has repeatedly made it plain that if the US starts flexing its muscles at Venezuela then he would not hesitate to cut off all oil exports to the USA.

Pat Robertson, televangelist, entrepreneur, one-time presidential candidate and close friend of the Bush family, undoubtedly expressed the sentiments of many US neo-cons when, speaking on his TV show on 22 August, he referred to Chavez as "a dangerous enemy to our south, controlling a huge pool of oil, that could hurt

continued: "I think that the time has come that we exercise that ability. We don't need another \$200 billion war to get rid of one, you know, strong-arm dictator. It's a whole lot easier to have some of the covert operatives do the job and then get it over with."

Robertson's "un-Christian" outburst quickly brought condemnation from the Republican hierarchy, keen to keep Bush away from further criticism. Whilst Robertson may claim not to know "about this doctrine of assassination", the simple fact is that consecutive US governments have attempted, arranged or supported the elimination of scores of leaders around the world. That Chavez has lasted so long is undoubtedly due to the international attention he has attracted of late.

Venezuela is no nearer socialism than Russia was when it claimed to have established it. Not only is it the case that it is impossible to establish socialism in one country, but it could never be established by a leader. If Chavez can take his country into socialism, which is downright absurd, then some other leader could just as easily lead them out of it again. Similarly, the reforms he has implemented could be taken away the moment he is removed from office.

Despite his popularity amongst the poor that could well carry him to another electoral victory next year and assure Venezuela of another six years of Bolivarian reformism, Chavez is compelled by circumstances to govern within the confines of capitalism.

The country still has a monetary system. The banks and big business, particularly oil interests, are still in private hands. There have been no seizures of land. International oil companies have bent over backwards to provide new investment, in spite of Venezuela having increased the royalties that they have to pay. There is still commodity production, still exploitation, still trade on the terms laid down by international capital and still armed forces ready to defend the economic interests of Venezuela's capitalist class. ■

JOHN BISSETT

Things can only get worse



Cooking the Books (1)

Although Labour was elected to office in 1997 to the sounds of 'Things Can Only Get Better', Blair is now singing a different tune. In the past the Labour Party used to argue that the state could, and should, be used to protect people from the worst effects of world market forces, through such measures as import controls, tariffs and subsidies to protect home industries and the employment they provided, and bans on the export of capital so that it was invested at home. Such views are still held by trade unionists, Leftwing reformists and the Green Party (which has taken over the Labour Party's discarded policies in this area).

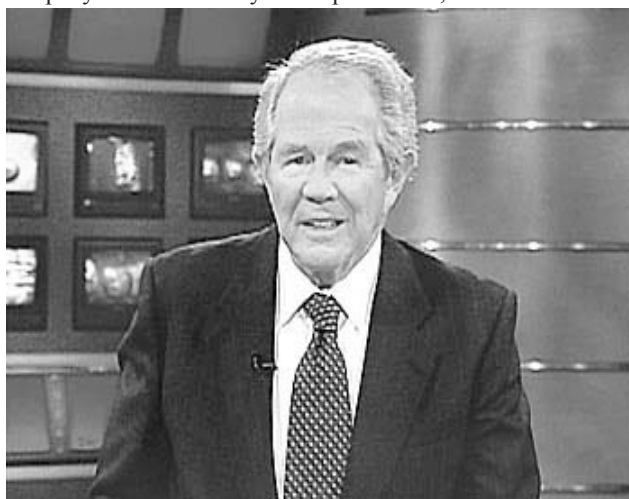
Blair now derides this as "the European social model of the past" and is actively campaigning to get other EU governments to abandon it too. In his Leader's speech to the annual Labour Party Show in Brighton he told the audience (they can hardly be called delegates since the resolutions they pass count for nothing):

"In the era of rapid globalisation, there is no mystery about what works: an open, liberal economy, prepared constantly to change to remain competitive. The new world rewards those who are open to it. ... The temptation is to use government to try to protect ourselves against the onslaught of globalisation by shutting it out - to think we protect a workforce by regulation, a company by government subsidy, an industry by tariffs. It doesn't work today. Because the dam holding back the global economy burst years ago. The competition can't be shut out; it can only be beaten" (*Guardian*, 28 September).

In other words, as the other member of the Thatcher-Blair Mutual Admiration Society used to put in: TINA. And, given capitalism, they are right; there is no alternative. What Marx called the "coercive laws of competition" can't be overcome; they have to be applied, not just by capitalist enterprises but by governments too.

But at what cost to workers and society in general? It means running fast - in fact, running faster and faster - just to stand still, continually introducing new methods of organisation and production so as to be able to keep down costs and ward off or beat the competition. It's a race to the bottom, involving, for those who actually produce and distribute the wealth of society, speed-ups, stress, precarious contracts, deregulations, redundancies, retraining, changing jobs - and the scrap heap for those who can't keep up.

And, despite Blair's optimism, there is no guarantee that, even with these changes, British capitalism will come out on top - who says competition, says losers as well as winners. Capitalism really is a rat race, or rather a treadmill, from which there's no relief.



Soldier of Christ: Pat Robertson says 'kill the unbeliever'.

Iranian experts on strategies for penetrating the Asian market.

And who else does Chavez cosy up to? None other than arch enemy of US conservatism Fidel Castro. In the past two years, Venezuela has supplied Cuba with vital shipments of subsidized oil to ease the country's perpetually faltering energy and transport systems, and in

us badly". He went on:

"You know, I don't know about this doctrine of assassination, but if he [Chavez] thinks we're trying to assassinate him, I think that we really ought to go ahead and do it. It's a whole lot cheaper than starting a war, and I don't think any oil shipments will stop."

Acknowledging that the US had the ability to bump Chavez off, Robertson



The Cult of the Professional Revolutionary

“Marriage and children are discouraged so that the professional revolutionary has only a loyalty to the group”

A cult is generally considered to be a group that indoctrinates its members into regarding themselves as a select group different from the rest of society. Some, but by no means all, such groups seek to isolate themselves. A typical example would be the closed Plymouth Brethren who avoid association with "the ungodly" (you and me). But others, such as the Scientologists and the Moonies actively engage with the rest of society in order to gain new recruits.

Cults are organised around a charismatic leader whose views are regarded as authoritative. The leader is surrounded by a group of seconds who transmit his or her views to the other followers. New members are encouraged to break off all relations with their previous life, often to change their name and surrender their property to the group; they are encouraged to identify totally with the group and to subordinate their individuality to it.

In some cases so total is the identification that the followers can be

persuaded to voluntarily follow their leader in committing suicide, as notoriously in 1978 when some 900 members of the "Reverend" Jim Jones' People's Temple cult committed mass suicide in Guyana and in 1997 when 39 members of the Heaven's Gate cult did so in California. The 7 July suicide bombers in London could be another example.

But how can humans be persuaded to kill themselves for what most people can see is a delusion? A recent attempt to explain this has been made by Janja Lalich in her book *Bounded Choice*, subtitled 'True Believers and Charismatic Cults' (University of California Press). Her explanation is given in the book's title: by means of a number of psychological techniques to which the cult members voluntarily, and often eagerly, submit, they come to so identify themselves with the cult that their freedom of choice becomes limited - "bounded" - to those offered by its ideology, however bizarre this might be.

Thus, for instance, in the Heaven's Gate cult, which is one of her two case

studies, the members came to believe that they really were aliens who had assumed human form and who were striving to return to their previous higher level of existence. Given this core belief, it was a logical - "bounded" - choice to decide to leave their human bodies, considered as mere "vehicles", to await rescue by an alien spaceship their leader told them was hidden behind the Hale-Bopp comet that was then passing by the Earth.

From 1975 to 1985 Lalich was a member of a Maoist group in San Francisco called the Democratic Workers Party. This is her second case study. Having ourselves been many times labelled a "sect" we are naturally wary about the concept of a cult being applied to political organisations. But Lalich makes out a good case for describing the DWP as a cult - in view of the type of organisational and psychological techniques employed, as by some religious groups, to weld the members to their organisation and its leaders - though one, of course, more like the Moonies than the Closed Brethren. And it is true that the Leninist principle of a vanguard party of professional

revolutionaries does, outside the political context of an openly repressive regime, lend itself to the would-be professional revolutionaries being organised as a cult.

We are of course opposed to Leninist organisational methods but we can see how, in the context of Tsarist Russia, a vanguard party organised on hierarchical and secretive lines would be one political option for anti-Tsarist revolutionaries, even if not a socialist form of organisation. The Bolshevik Party could not legitimately be called a cult; it was a political organisation. But why, in conditions of relative political democracy allowing people to organise openly, would some want to organise on such a basis? Why would anyone want to organise a corps of professional revolutionaries when there was no political necessity to do so?

The DWP aimed to be a party of disciplined, full-time professional revolutionaries under a strong leader, dedicated to serving the cause of "the proletariat" (perceived, in accord with Leninist theory, as being incapable of acting by and for themselves). The party was organised on a hierarchical basis with the Leader at the top surrounded by a small staff, an intermediate level of department heads (appointed and revocable by the top leadership) and the ordinary rank-and-file members.

There were three levels of membership: trial, candidate and general:

"All General Members had full voting rights and were considered full-time, which meant they were to be on call, at the Party's disposal, twenty-four hours a day. Trial Members had no rights; they were to learn. If the Trial Membership stage was passed (based on study, level of participation and good behavior), then appropriate leadership personnel commended that the young militant be moved up to the status of Candidate Member, with partial political rights".

As in the Heaven's Gate cult, all members had to adopt a new name:

"Once a Party name was chosen, only that name was to be used; and immediately new members learned others' Party names. Militants were never to reveal their real name to other members, not even to roommates. Party names were used in all meetings or gatherings, in all DWP facilities and in all houses where members lived. For the new member, taking on a name was the first stage in losing his or her pre-Party identity and assuming a Party-molded one".

And to sacrifice their income and property:

"The dues structure was set up so that each militant gave over all monies received above a group-determined living amount, set at approximately poverty-level standards. All monetary or substantial gifts (such as a car), job bonuses, legal settlements, and inheritances were turned over to the Party".

The poverty-line income forced members to live together in communal houses, thus making them even more dependent on the party and its leaders. Its leader (one Marlene Dixon) did not have to live on the poverty line, but had other members assigned to cook and clean for her.

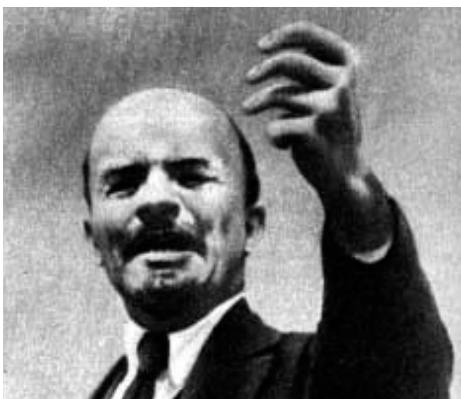
The DWP was committed to the Leninist concept of "democratic centralism". On paper this means that there is a full discussion of some policy document but that, when it has been

adopted, all members, including those who voted against it, have to be committed to carrying it out. Some Leninist groups do try to operate on this basis, allowing the preliminary democratic discussion, but not the DWP. According to Dixon, in a document entitled 'On the Development of Leninist Democracy':

"[D]emocracy is a method for the selection of leadership and a method of assuring that the most developed and tested comrades, the cadre, the bones of a Leninist party, govern the party".

What this meant in practice was:

"[T]he leaders would give a presentation on a change in direction of some work, or would open a denunciation of a militant for some error. Each militant



Vanguardist: Lenin

present was expected to say how much he or she agreed with what was just said".

Members were subject to public sessions of criticism and self-criticism in which they had to confess to any "petty bourgeois" failings or lapses the leadership pointed out to them. There were also sanctions for breaches of discipline (and even a security service trained by an ex-Marine):

"Given the emphasis on obedience and discipline members understood that they could be sanctioned for not following rules or for in any way breaking the discipline. Militants were 'punished' in a variety of ways besides submitting to collective criticism sessions and writing self-criticisms. More practical sanctions, for example, were increased quotas, extra work duty, demotion from a particular position or function, removal from a practice, and instructions to leave a workplace or cease contact with a particular person. In more serious cases, there were periods of probation, suspension, or even house arrest (which could mean being confined and guarded by security forces)".

It might be wondered why the members put up with such a regime. Lalach's explanation is, once again, "bounded choice" in that they had convinced themselves, and had had this conviction continually reinforced by the group's practices, that such a hierarchically-disciplined party was necessary to further the cause of the proletariat. In the end they didn't put up with it. When Dixon was away on a trip to Europe in November 1985 the other leaders, including Lalach, met and decided to expel Dixon and dissolve the organisation.

It's a disturbing story but is one consequence of the application of the Leninist theory of a vanguard party of professional revolutionaries in conditions other than a political despotism. All

Leninist groups engage in some of the practices described by Lalach, for instance, different levels of membership, leadership-dominated meetings and a willingness on the part of the members to be told what to do. That doesn't mean that all Leninist groups are cults in the sense that the DWP was. But some are. It is clear, for instance, from their external behaviour that the Spartacist League (who publish *Workers Hammer*) must be and there is documented evidence that the French Trotskyist group Lutte Ouvrière and the 'left communist' International Communist Current are. In his 1999 book *La vraie nature d'Arlette* ('The True Nature of Arlette' - Arlette Laguiller, LO's permanent presidential candidate) the journalist François Koch describes LO militants as "soldier-monks", because of their self-imposed life-style (marriage and children are discouraged so that the professional revolutionary has only a loyalty to the group). In 2000 a group of ex-members of the French section of the ICC published a pamphlet *Que Ne Pas Faire?* ('What Is Not To Be Done?') which exposed similar practices to some of those described by Lalach in the DWP (an older, charismatic leader; adoption of a new name; an order-giving hierarchy; interrogations; a security service).

Because these organisations use some of the same terminology as we do - even to the extent of allowing us to engage in an apparently rational debate with them over the best way to get rid of capitalism - this sort of thing discredits the whole idea of socialism and organisation for socialism. Fortunately, a Leninist vanguard party of professional revolutionaries is not the only way that those who want socialism can organise. There is another way, which we in the Socialist Party have adopted and practice: an open, democratic organisation in which all members have an equal say and in which policy is made by a conference of mandated branch delegates or by a referendum of the whole membership; in which there is no leadership and where the executive committee's role is merely to carry out policy decided by conference or the membership, apply the rulebook, deal with correspondence, pay bills, etc without having any policy-making powers.

With such an organisational structure it is simply inconceivable that anything remotely like what happened in the DWP could happen nor indeed like what happens in non-cultic but still leadership-dominated Leninist organisations such as the SWP.

Leninists imagine that workers are only capable of reaching a trade union consciousness and flatter themselves that their consciousness as a vanguard is higher. Actually, it's the other way round. Most trade unions have democratic constitutions, even if largely these days only on paper. The Leninist theory of organisation is a throw-back to political conditions such as existed in Tsarist Russia, and its introduction into more politically-developed Western Europe following the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in Russia has been an unmitigated disaster for the working class and socialism. As a theory of leadership it is anti-socialist and to be rejected on political grounds. In practice it can easily lead to such aberrations as the DWP and so is to be rejected on grounds of human dignity too. ■

ADAM BUICK



Do we need money?

It sounds like a silly question, doesn't it? Of course we need money: we need it to pay our rent or mortgage, to buy food and clothes, to purchase cinema tickets and DVDs, and so on. There's no question that, with the world organised the way it is, we do need money, and we couldn't live without it. Credit cards and cheques make no difference, they are just different ways of paying by money, so that we don't have to carry huge amounts of notes and coins around with us.

But let's step back a bit and ask ourselves, why do we need money? It's because we can't get hold of the food, clothes, tickets or DVDs, or occupy our house or flat, unless we have the money to pay for them. We can try to take food or whatever without paying, but if we're caught we will very soon be told that this is theft and it's against the law, and we'll be punished for it in some way.

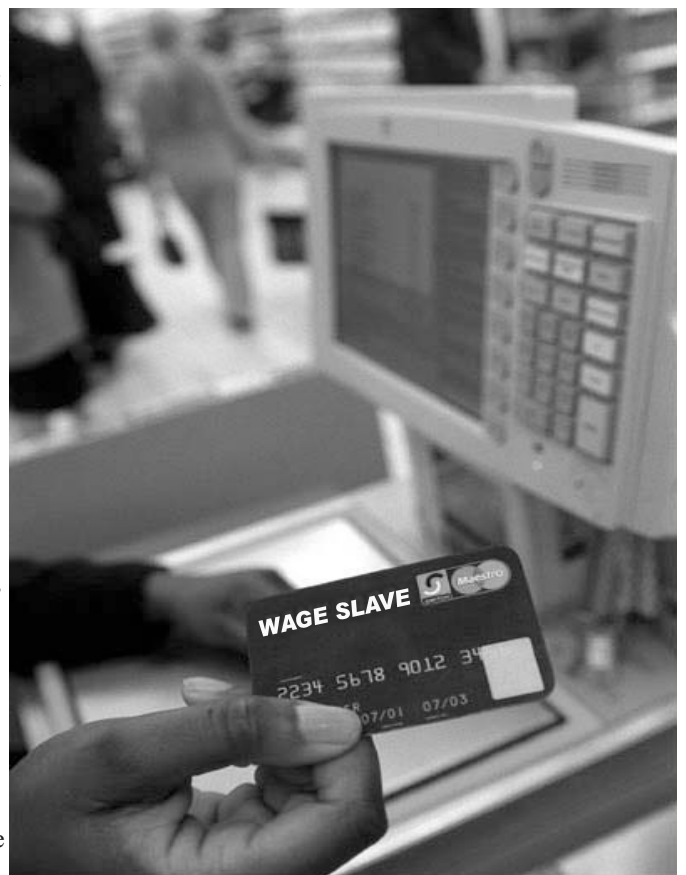
Basically, it has been decided (but by who?) that people in general cannot get hold of things (more formally, cannot gain access to them) unless they pay. The payment transfers ownership from the shop or supermarket or manufacturing company to the customer. Once you've bought something, you can then do more or less what you like with it.

So the money is just a means of saying 'This is mine, not yours'. And that's what the shop is saying too: 'Unless you pay us, you can't use this.' Now, from some points of view, this is a strange way of going about things. In the first place, some areas of

our lives aren't arranged like this at all. Many people do things for other people - lend or give them something, or perform some service - without expecting any payment: they do this out of friendship or for their neighbours or family members. Furthermore, not everything we want to have access to requires payment. Usually we can all go to the local park without having to pay to get in. Many towns have free shuttle buses to transport people around the town centre, or to and from the local railway station. But try to travel on the train without a ticket and you'll be in trouble.

However, let's just imagine that the world was run differently, that everything was free (though in that case the concept of 'free' presumably wouldn't mean anything!). Suppose you could go to the supermarket, collect the food you wanted for yourself and your family, and then just leave without having to queue at the checkouts. You'd probably choose the best-quality food without having to worry about its cost. In fact, since nobody would have to buy cheap and nasty food, all the food available would be top quality. There'd be no point in taking more than you needed, because you'd always be able to go back and get more if you ran out, and it's just wasteful (and, in fact, daft) to take lots of milk and bread, say, if you know you won't be able to use them.

This probably sounds like quite a good idea, but would this same principle work with clothes rather than food? Wouldn't people just want masses of clothes, and always from the top designers and brand names? Well, let's just think a bit about the implications of a world without money along the lines I've just begun to describe. Nobody will be able to show off by flaunting an expensive dress or tie, and nobody will want brand names or designer labels since anyone can have them (if they still exist) so a brand name won't mean anything. Quite probably people will still want to look smart and attractive, but this won't be by wearing clothes that 'cost a fortune'. And like food, there would be no point in having lots of clothes lying around in a wardrobe gathering dust: people





On the Road to Nowhere

would just take from the shops or warehouses what they wanted for their personal use, not what would be intended to impress others. Also, since nobody would profit from selling more clothes, there would be no relentless pushing of new fashions each year.

So it's not difficult to imagine a world without money, a world where what people consumed and enjoyed would not be limited by the size of their wage packet, where everyone could gain access to the best of everything. But again, questions arise. Would there, for instance, be enough to go round? Well, think firstly, about how much effort, and how many people's work, goes

into money and all its paraphernalia. It's not just the shopworkers whose work is mainly or entirely concerned with money. There's everyone who works for a bank or insurance company, who deals with accounts and prices, who issues or collects tickets. In a world without money, these people and many others (those who manufacture guns, for instance) would devote their labour to producing goods that people need. The money system doesn't just prevent people gaining access to what has been produced, it also seriously reduces what is produced.

But then again, would people work in a world where there was no money and they were not getting paid? Yes, they would. The alternative, after all, would be a life of idleness, which may be great for a two-week holiday period every summer but soon becomes very boring. Work, too, would be made as enjoyable as possible, which means it would be safe, satisfying and fun. People would enjoy working with each other, never doing one kind of

things is pleasant in itself.

You can see that a world without money wouldn't just be like today except that there would be no price tags on anything. Rather, it implies a completely different way of organising things. For a start, production would be carried on for use and not for profit. This means goods would be produced because they satisfied people's wants and needs, rather than because they produced a profit. In such circumstances, dangerous, unhealthy and shoddy goods would never see the light of day, as there would be no reason to produce them. In addition, the factories,

offices and land would not be the exclusive property of a small number of millionaires, which is what happens now. Instead, they would be owned by everyone (which is equivalent to saying they would be owned by no one). And they would therefore be controlled by everyone, not by a small bunch of owners.

But it doesn't stop there. There would be no need for governments either, because governments exist to run the system on behalf of the small number of people who own the lion's share of the wealth. It's the government, for instance, that runs the police and court systems that will teach anyone who takes without paying a lesson about who owns what. Along with governments, there'd be no countries either, because the division of the world into countries simply suits the interests of the owners in particular parts of the world. Nor would armies be needed, as they fight for the owners against the armies of the owners from other countries, in disputes over access to raw materials like oil.

A world without money also means a world without poverty, because that's the flipside of money controlling access to things. 'No money, no chance' is the current

"No money, no chance' is the current motto, but one that results in the obscenity of destitution and starvation in a world that could easily provide plenty for all."

motto, but one that results in the obscenity of destitution and starvation in a world that could easily provide plenty for all.

So doing away with money would also mean doing away with governments, countries and armies, as well as the

division into rich and poor. We, the human inhabitants of the planet, don't need money - it gets in the way and stops us from enjoying this world and what we could make of it. One word for the world without money is socialism, but it's not the name that matters, it's the idea. If the idea sounds attractive to you, then you should find out more about the Socialist Party and our views. ■

Paul Bennett



Cooking the Books (2)

More conservative mottos

That wage increases cause price increases is an old lie. This assumes that capitalist firms can raise the price of their products at will. But they can't. They can only charge what the market will bear. Workers are in a basically similar position. But the market for products and the market for labour power are two different markets. Assuming that firms are charging what the market will bear - and they'd be foolish not to - then, if the labour market allows the workers a chance to push up wages, firms just have to live with increased costs and lower profits for the time being.

It is because wage increases eat into profits - not because they supposedly cause "inflation" - that employers fight them and, as far as they and the media are concerned, any old argument, even one that's not

true, will do to oppose and discredit groups of workers demanding a wage increase.

In any event, even if a wage increase in a firm did lead to an increased price of that firm's products, that would not be inflation, which is an increase in the general price level. Such an increase can come about for various reasons - increased demand for products in a boom, a fall in the value of gold when it's the money-commodity, and an overissue of a nonconvertible paper currency. Even though the double-digit inflation of the 1970s is over, inflation still exists today and is mainly caused by inflating the currency. The Bank of England has a remit to inflate the currency by 2 percent a year. Which is why both prices and wages tend to increase annually by more or less this amount, depending on conditions in particular markets.

The view that wage increases cause price increases has long been argued over. In 1865 the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association in London devoted

four meetings to discussing it. At the last of these Marx decisively refuted the argument in a lecture that was published after his death as a pamphlet *Value, Price and Profit*. This has now been republished, under what was its original title of *Wages, Price and Profits*, by the Communist Party of Britain, which publishes the *Morning Star* and which is the real political successor to the old Communist Party of Great Britain (and not to be confused with another group which has usurped this name and which publishes a paper called the *Weekly Worker*).

After explaining why workers should always press for the highest wages they can get, Marx famously urged the unions:

"Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!' they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'"

In his introduction, Robert Griffiths of the CPB's Economic Committee can't ignore this and

has to pay lip service to Marx by writing that he held that "workers would forever be commodities to be exploited until capitalism and its wages system were abolished". But he then ignores this completely, going on to advocate that unions should aim at, as well as higher wages, "statutory price controls", "better state benefits and pensions", "more public services", "controls on the export of capital". All of which assume the continuation of capitalism.

If Marx returned today we know what he would say: Instead of the conservative motto 'statutory price controls/better state benefits, etc, etc' the unions ought to inscribe on their banners the revolutionary watchword 'Abolition of the Wages System'.

BUSHMEN AND THE PROGRESS OF CAPITALISM

It has been estimated that the so-called Bushmen of the Kalahari have lived in southern Africa for at least 20,000 years, but that cuts no ice with the zealots hell-bent on the development of capitalism in that part of the world.

"The Bushmen of the Kalahari - among Africa's last indigenous peoples - are on the verge of losing their ancestral homeland after the Government of Botswana stepped up a campaign to force them into squalid resettlement camps" (*Times*, 12 September). The government has sent heavily armed wildlife guards into the Central Kalahari Game reserve - an area that had been promised to the Bushmen "in perpetuity". Their aim is to remove some 200 to 250 Gana and Gwi who have returned there from the resettlement camps. The *Times* report continues: "Stephen Corry, director of Survival International, which has been highlighting the Bushmen's plight, said: 'The Government seems hell-bent on finishing them off this time. The situation is very urgent. Unless circumstances change through outside intervention, this could very well be the end of these particular people'".

The plight of the Gana and Gwi people is by no means unique. The development of capitalism crushes all the tribal

societies it comes into contact with. In the past we have had the slaughter of the native Americans in the USA, the butchery of the Australian aborigines and more recently of the Yanomami in Northern Brazil. The concept of a tribal society that lives by gathering and



Bushmen of the Kalahari



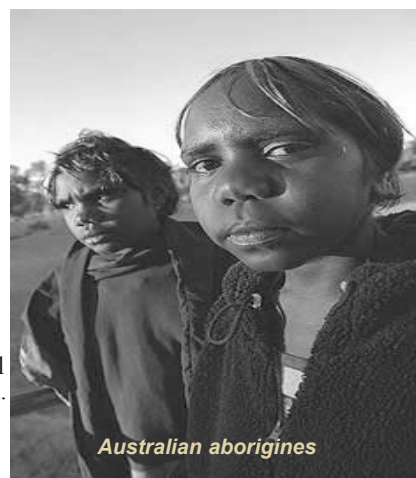
Yanomami of Venezuela

hunting with no recourse to capitalism's markets is anathema to a property-based social system.

The Botswana government has destroyed the tribal wells and banned hunting in its efforts to restrict tribal groups. The growth of farming and diamond mining probably lie behind the government's recent actions. Some government ministers have hinted that the evictions are needed because deposits of diamonds have been found in the area, although the state diamond company, which is an offshoot of De Beers claim they are uneconomic to mine.

"However, De Beers does not rule out mining them at a later date."

The development of capitalism in Africa must crush tribal communities just as it did in Europe and America. The only hope for a communal life-style is not a return to primitive tribal society, but the transformation of present day private property, profit-producing society into the new social system of world socialism.



Australian aborigines

There Are Words for It...

Around five thousand languages are spoken at the moment, a number likely to be halved by the end of the twenty-first century. This is partly due to the impact of the world's 'major' languages, such as Spanish, Russian and (above all, of course) English. As English becomes a truly global language, the main language of films, popular music and the internet, not only do its words find their way even into languages like German, but it completely displaces many local or minority languages. The decline in numbers is also caused by the growing role of 'national languages', those taught in schools and recognised as a country's main language of communication. Tupac, for instance, once widely spoken in Brazil, is now down to a few hundred speakers, pushed out by the expansion of Portuguese (though it will live on in words it has given to English, such as jaguar).

Endangered languages like this have existed throughout history, but are now far commoner than previously. The reasons for this are usually seen as straightforwardly political:

"large centralized political units (both the old-fashioned empire and the all-modern nation state) cause the total number of languages in their territory to decline. In so

far as the world goes on being apportioned in such units, the total number of languages in the world will go on falling." (Andrew Dalby: *Language in Danger*)

This statement is correct as far as it goes, but it plays down the economic factors behind language death. Languages decline and die when the communities of their speakers are disrupted (by conquest, exile, disease, and so on) or when children grow up speaking in daily life a language other than that of their parents. This can happen for various reasons, one being that the 'new' language is seen as a means of economic advancement, perhaps just because it has more speakers and can offer better employment prospects or a bigger market. Languages with a few thousand, or even a few million speakers, can hardly 'compete' with English, the language of international business.

Even the way a language is written can be affected by political and economic considerations. After the collapse of the



Russian Empire in 1991, the governments of the new countries of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan decided to switch from the Cyrillic to the Roman alphabet to write their respective national languages, which are all related to Turkish. This was partly due to anti-Russian nationalism - the Cyrillic alphabet, which is used to write Russian, having been imposed by Stalin in the 1940s. But it is also clearly motivated by a desire to attract tourists and business visitors and to make it easier for people there to learn English. Returning to the Arabic alphabet (which was used in these countries before the Cyrillic) would have been possible, but would not have served the new rulers' westernising aims.

Besides undermining the status of languages, economic factors can lead to the creation of new languages. In *The Power of Babel*, John McWhorter traces the origins of Russenorsk, a kind of mixture of Russian and Norwegian, which came into being in the nineteenth century when Russian traders brought timber to Norway every summer to sell. Russenorsk was a very basic kind of language, useful for bartering and various other kinds of social interaction, but not usable for political debate or discussion of any abstract ideas. Languages like this are termed pidgins, and they usually arise when two groups of speakers come together in specific circumstances. Many Native Americans at first spoke Pidgin English



when speaking to white people, while maintaining their own languages too. Unlike Russenorsk, which was a genuine mixture, this Pidgin English consisted almost entirely of words from the language of the dominant group - English - since English-speakers rarely had any desire or motivation to learn a local language. This is the usual situation: the language of the conquerors or colonists provides the vocabulary of the pidgin, which the conquered people have to use to talk with their new masters.

Pidgins often die out after a while: the subordinate group may well adopt the

language of their conquerors, as happened in North America. Russenorsk ceased to be needed when the Russian Revolution put an end to the timber-trading. But sometimes a pidgin is expanded to become a full-fledged language, not one just used for a few special purposes, but one with its own individual structure and a vocabulary as large as that of any 'normal' language. A pidgin which has become a full language like this is called a creole; formation of a creole usually happens when people speaking different native languages and only sharing a pidgin are brought together. McWhorter mentions the case of Sranan, a creole spoken in Surinam, on the northern coast of South America. This was a British-owned slave colony, and slaves from various parts of Africa who were brought there had only Pidgin English in common at first. This eventually expanded to become Sranan, which is widely spoken in Surinam nowadays, alongside Dutch.

In fact the slave trade is the commonest causal factor in the origins of creoles. This appallingly cruel and immensely profitable system of trading in human beings resulted, among other things, in millions of people being uprooted from their homes and families, transported across the world, and set to work in desperate and scarcely-believable conditions. It should come as little surprise to learn that many

languages of the West Indies are creoles (Jamaican creole, for instance), as is Tok Pisin, one of the official languages of Papua New Guinea. As creolised forms of pidgin Englishes, these still have vocabularies that are partly derived from English, but they are absolutely not debased forms of English. The languages of other colonising nations have also given rise to creoles, such as a Portuguese-based creole in the Cape Verde Islands in the North Atlantic, and the French-based creole spoken in Haiti. As McWhorter says, "most creoles have arisen amid conditions of unthinkably stark and ineradicable social injustice."

One, rather controversial, claim is that the development of agriculture about ten thousand years ago led to the wiping out of many languages, as cultivators expanded their territories and settled down, thus overrunning existing groups of hunter-gatherers, who may well each have spoken their own language. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that capitalism, with its globalisation and its tendency to make everything homogeneous, is now killing off languages like nobody's business. An examination of the current state and historical development of the world's languages shows how capitalism leaves its ugly footprints everywhere, even in the way we speak. ■

Paul Bennett

Is Marxism dead?

Surely before we cheer or weep over the bier of Marxism we should clearly identify the corpse. What exactly do we mean by Marxism?

Marxism is a materialist method of interpreting history; an explanation of social class and a labour theory of value. However, rather than getting involved in Marx's rather complicated theories, it is simpler to look at his vision of a proposed alternative to capitalism, which he called socialism (following Robert Owen) or communism - he and the pioneers of the socialist movement used the terms 'communism' and 'socialism' interchangeably.

Marx saw wage labour and capital as two sides of the same relation and affirmed that one could not exist without the other. He advised workers to remove from their banners the conservative slogan of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and instead inscribe 'Abolition of the wages!' He saw the state - by its nature - as an executive committee of a ruling class and held that in socialism government of people would give way to a simple, democratic administration of things.

In other words, Marx's vision of socialism was of a social system of common ownership of the means of production, the resources of nature and the means of distribution essentially achieved by a conscious democratic process and administered necessarily by the widest possible forms of participative democracy.

It is important to emphasise - however obvious it should be - that the wageless, classless, moneyless and stateless world he envisaged could not be established by other than the conscious democratic action of a majority.

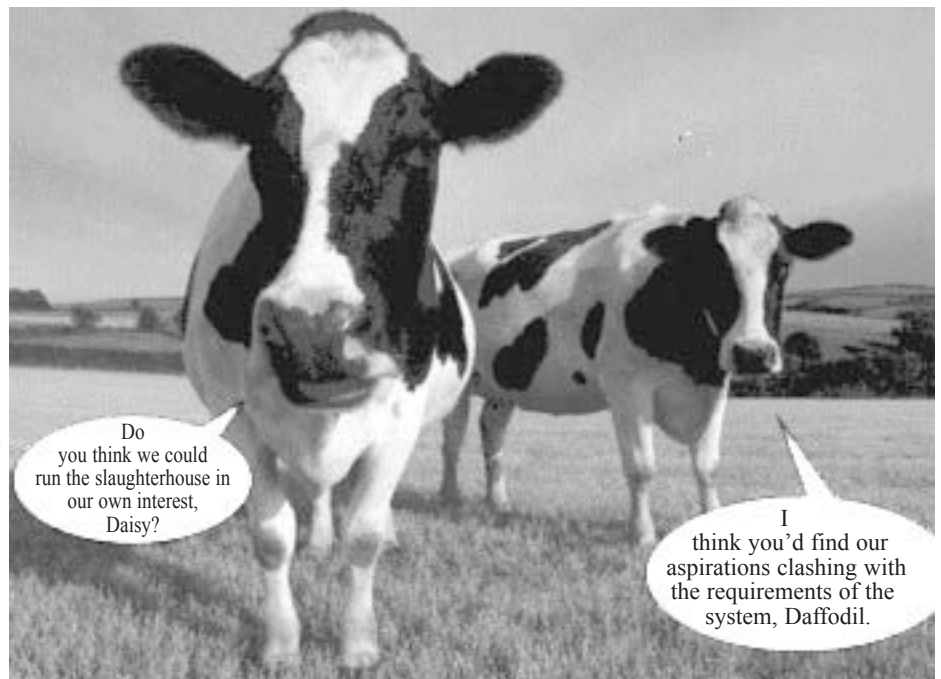
Today Left and Right are meaningless terms; each is one side of the spectrum of capitalism; and, because both accept to take on the political stewardship of capitalism, economic and political necessity frequently means they adopt each other's positions. Always when the Left gains power it creates dissidence within its own outer ranks when its aspirations clash with the requirements of the system and the capitalist ruling class.

In Britain today, 'Old Labour' - with a very short memory of old Labour governments! - bemoan the activities of Blair, Brown, Straw,

Blunkett and Clarke. We should remember that most of these men were Lefties and CNDers and that none of them invented 'Blairism'. Blairism and its outcrops are simply the logical application of the illogical reformist thesis that capitalism can be made to function in the interests of the working class; a bit like saying that the slaughterhouses can function for the benefit of the cattle.

Socialism/communism has never existed anywhere, nor could it exist in just part of the world, because it is the global alternative to a decadent global system. Socialists in open debate with upholders of capitalism will shatter their arguments and throw its philosophers to the wind. But the political agents of capitalism have learnt never to attack socialism as Karl Marx envisaged; instead they attack a perversion of Marxism which they call Marxist-Leninism - a contradiction in terms - or the limping incompetence of Left reformism in government.

Those who want to see socialism must first unequivocally delineate what they mean by the term, as all scientific practice calls for. Once this is done, it can be seen that socialism as advocated by Marx is still very much alive. ■



Doubtful Benefits

Ministers try to portray the people dependent on benefits as somehow culpable for the whole cost of the benefits system.



It's another day with a 'Y' in its name, so the government must be attacking benefits scroungers again. The routine pieties of the modern political age are to talk about 'helping people' out of 'the benefits trap' and 'back into work' - joining the perennial political duties like cutting red tape and reducing government spending. The reason why these problems never go away is because they are problems caused by the very system which puts the politicians in power, and which they cannot resolve without destroying themselves and their own elevated statuses.

David Blunkett - now returned to the cabinet after resigning last year for abusing his office for personal gain in helping his lover's nanny get a visa quicker - has been making loud noises about the 'crackers' Incapacity Benefit system. It is Blunkett's role to sound like a bruiser, to talk tough and act tough, seen by many as appealing to Labour's core constituency - former Tory voters on council estates. He bemoaned the continuing rise of people on incapacity benefits (many driven there by previous efforts to try and cut benefits claimants, helped by staff driven by targets to reduce certain types of benefits).

There are currently 2.7 million people on incapacity benefit in the UK, with something like 29 million people in employment (possibly the highest UK figure ever). According to the BBC, that is four times the number of IB recipients compared to 30 years ago. Of course, many things have changed since then, not least the structure of the benefits system as a whole. Blunkett, however, still wants to drastically reduce the numbers on incapacity.

Revealing his new status as a medical doctor, Blunkett pronounced that getting out to work is a better cure for depression than staying at home watching daytime telly. This startling revelation must have shocked his fellow healthcare professionals who had been labouring under the impression that depression is a medical ailment of the brain as much as a break is a medical condition of the leg. Perhaps Blunkett will now advise a brisk walk as a cure for that.

Behind the tough rhetoric, though, as ever with the modern Machiavellian Labour Party, is some old-fashioned Old Labour-style reforms: plans to make the benefits

system 'a ladder to self-reliance' and to give assistance with training and finding jobs to people who are on IB. Simplification of the system may actually help people who are supposed to be too ill to work but have to be well enough to run from pillar to post to fill in their 2,000 page benefits claim form signed in triplicate in blood. Or something like that.

This is cut from the same cloth as the New Deal and all their previous schemes to 'help' the unemployed back to work by badgering them and managing them into being full-time professional job seekers. Of course, this runs counter to any notion that they can quickly cut costs. This month also saw the National Audit Office reveal that only 5% of people on IB were able to access back to work schemes. To assist more people through such structures will actually increase the cost of managing the benefits, not decrease it, as massive expansion would be required.

This is the central conundrum for governments: caught between a real problem beyond their control, trapped by their own eternal propaganda of cost cutting, they cannot pursue their eternal propaganda of getting people off benefits. Instead, all we have is a Groundhog Day of pronouncements and denouncements as the Ministers try to be seen doing something, usually by trying to portray the people who are dependent on benefits as somehow culpable and at fault for the whole of the costs of the benefits system.

Politicians are struggling to define the typical benefits recipient, to legitimise the idea of welfare so they can attack it and reduce costs and also increase downwards pressures on wages and the labour market. Most people in the UK are probably only too pay cheques away from needing to call on benefits, but rather than portray it as a system to help people and prevent catastrophe it is universally presented as a location of cheats, frauds and scroungers, riddled with layabouts and other undeserving poor types. Benefits and being on benefits is to be despised and feared.

Despite this, though, people are compelled to claim them because of the wages system, because they are too ill to work or because work is not available. The benefits system actually benefits employers

who otherwise would face the costs and disruption of having to keep on people whose illness makes them turn up to work irregularly, who would lie in desperation to get jobs about their illnesses, and push much of the cost currently borne generally through taxes directly onto capitalists who employ many workers.

Herein is the rub of the £3 billion lost from the system by fraud and 'error' - much of it will have been small sums given to people which will have made their lives easier. Some of it will have contributed to the real living needs of claimants. The real tragedy is not the fraud or the overspend, but that much of the £109 billion budget is wasted assessing people, categorising people and cheeseparating their entitlements. There is enough food, clothing and housing to go round. The world today is not short of wealth. In order, though, to maintain labour discipline, to keep the labour market in existence, a massive welfare budget must be expended to deny access to the things people need.

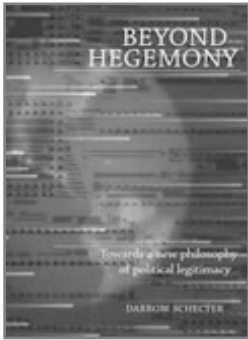
The simple fact is that we live in a society overripe for socialism. The material possibility has been around the corner for years. When we remove the barriers to the access of wealth, we also remove the barriers that make some people unemployable, that make socialising and community a cost that has to be scraped out of local authority and social services budgets. We would remove the binds, the need to support a restrictive welfare system but simultaneously to attack it and try to reduce its budget, by the principle of producing freely together.

Socialists, unlike leftists, do not support the welfare state, do not see it as a way to socialism, but as an inevitable part of capitalism, of administering poverty. The abolition of poverty - not in far-flung imagined foreign fields where poverty is vividly drawn by the masters of propaganda, but on the very streets where we walk and it is painted out by those same illusionists - will mean an end to the welfare ideology. With luck, it will also mean seeing less of David Blunkett's face revelling in his own 'stern compassion'. ■

PIK SMEET

Gilded Socialism

Darrow Schechter: Beyond Hegemony. Manchester University Press. £55.



This turns out to be an attempt to work out a philosophical and sometimes nearly incomprehensible (at least outside the little world of academia) basis for an alternative to liberal democracy (free-market capitalism), social-democracy

(regulated capitalism) and what Schechter calls "state socialism" (state capitalism).

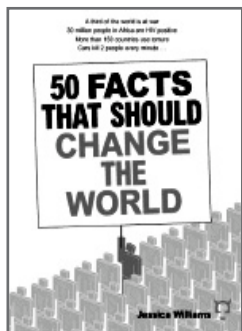
Schechter identifies that what is wrong with these is that all three of them involve commodity production and consumption ("production for exchange and the generation of money and capital rather than direct use"), and that the alternative has to be a system where there is production directly for use. Unfortunately, he sees the answer in the Utopian scheme devised in the 1920s by the Labour historian (and Labour Party activist) G.D.H. Cole, which he called "Guild Socialism". Although Cole's blueprint did provide for close links between consumers and producers which could be interpreted as "production directly for use", it still envisaged the continuation of finance, prices and incomes. And it was to come into being through the guilds eventually outcompeting capitalist industries in the marketplace (though, to be fair to Schechter, he doesn't explicitly endorse this and may well not support it).

But if Schechter stands for "Guild Socialism" why doesn't he just campaign for it? Does it really need the elaborate philosophical basis he has constructed for it? Perhaps it's just that university lecturers have to publish to justify their jobs.

ALB

Dreadful Catalogue

Jessica Williams: 50 Facts that Should Change the World. Icon £6.99.



The obvious reaction to the title is to say that it's people that change the world, not facts. But Jessica Williams begins by claiming that the facts she has assembled can change the way people think. The information gathered here does

indeed provide many reasons why the world needs to be changed.

Much of what is said will probably be familiar to readers of the Socialist Standard. One in five of the earth's population go

hungry each day, for instance, while one British child in three lives below the poverty line, and life expectancy is strikingly low in many countries, especially in Africa. Others are perhaps not so appalling: is it really so bad that Brazil has more Avon ladies than members of its armed forces? But many will find much that is new and enlightening here. For example, far from slavery having been abolished, there are more slaves in the world today (27 million) than at any time previously. More people die from suicide than from armed conflicts: in 2000 around one million people killed themselves and at least ten times that number tried to do so. What sort of world is it in which so many find their lives insupportable to this extent?

Or where over two hundred million child labourers exist? In nine countries, same-sex relationships are punishable by death, while over 150 states make use of torture. One third of the world's population live in countries involved in armed conflict, and black American men stand a one-in-three chance of going to prison at some time in their lives. Two million women are subjected to female genital mutilation each year, while over one million people are killed in road traffic accidents.

The book presents a dreadful catalogue of poverty, violence, degradation and waste, a vivid picture of 21st-century capitalism, all backed up with useful references. Williams adds commentary of her own, together with ideas for solving the problems. Some of this is OK - she recognises that famine and malnutrition are not caused by food shortages. But far too much of it is concerned with what governments should do and how 'we' should influence them. The real lesson to draw, though, is that we truly do need to change the world, not just get the rulers to behave in a more enlightened way.

PB

The Measure of All Things

Postmodern Humanism. By Jack Grassby. TUPS books. 2005. £9.95

Until the 1960s Secularists, Rationalists and Free Thinkers as they were variously called had a reputation, rightly or wrongly, of being negative god-killers, bible-debunkers and priest-baiters. Then, in 1963, a group which felt the need to appear more positive set up the British Humanist Association. They still seem to be working out what their positive case is beyond promoting a non-religious but still ethical approach to life. Recently they set up a working group to examine their core values. Jack Grassby is a member of the North East Humanists and his book is intended as a contribution to this debate.

It is not certain that it will appeal to his fellow Humanists as he embraces two approaches most of them would not normally like any more than we do: sociobiology (with its biological determinism) and postmodernism (with its rejection of any universal human values). Also, it contains a number of embarrassing howlers, such as stating that homo sapiens emerged from the Neanderthals and that Socrates preached that "man is the measure of all things" whereas this was the view of the Sophists that Socrates set out to rubbish. Come to think of it, "man is the measure of all things" could

well be the core-value that the Humanists are searching for.

ALB

Simply Odd

A Rebel's Guide to Lenin. Ian Birchall. Bookmarks. £2.

This is an odd, 58-page top-pocket-size pamphlet. Odd because it is written in very simple language and seems to be aimed at schoolkids who might be influenced by anarchist ideas.

Thus, Birchall tells us, "Lenin's goal was the same as the anarchists", but he recognised that the path it would be complex". Yes indeed, by means of the dictatorship of a vanguard party which would last for years and which would, supposedly, in time give up its power and privilege and abolish the state.

Birchall quotes from ex-anarchists who came over to the Bolsheviks such as Alfred Rosmer and Victor Serge and tells us that Lenin "spent hours discussing with anarchists such as Emma Goodman from the US and Makhno from Ukraine" and argued that "the syndicalist idea of an 'organised minority' of the most militant workers and the Bolshevik idea of the party were the same thing".

This may have worked in the aftermath of the first world war and the Russian revolution to temporarily win over a number of anarchists and syndicalists, but it is hard to see it working today to get any budding anarchists to join the SWP.

ALB

Correction

Two mistakes found their way into the article "Why They Dropped the Bombs" in the October issue. The date of the Potsdam ultimatum to Japan was 26 July not 21 July as stated and there was a reference to a comment of the Joint Intelligence Committee in "March 1940". Readers will have realised that this cannot have been since the US and Japan were not even at war at that point. It should of course have read "March 1944".

Africa: a Marxian Analysis

A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from *The Socialist Standard*. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis is applied to:

- State and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Tribalism
- Colonialism and Capitalism
- Religion, Race and Class
- Sharia Law in Nigeria

- Early 20th Century South Africa



Available from **The Socialist Party**, 52 Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN. £1 (£1.35 by post). Cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain"

CENTRAL LONDON DAY SCHOOL

Saturday 12 November, 13.30 to 17.00

THE HUMAN REVOLUTION

13.30 Welcome. Tea. Coffee. Biscuits.

14.00 Guest Speaker: Chris Knight
(Professor of Anthropology, University
of East London)

Chair: Bill Martin (Socialist Party).

16.00 Tea break

16.30 More questions and discussion

Room 7, Friends Meeting House, 173
Euston Rd, London NW1

(opposite Euston mainline station;
nearest tubes: Euston, Euston
Square).

CENTRAL LONDON BRANCH

Monday 14 November, 7.45 pm
Carpenters Arms, Seymour Place,
W1 (near Marble Arch)

'DON'T TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER'

A discussion meeting on socialist
views on leadership will be opened
by Stan Parker

MANCHESTER BRANCH

Monday 28 November, 8pm

DISCUSSION ON PREJUDICE

Hare and Hounds, Shudehill, City
Centre

NORWICH

Saturday 5 November

Welcome and informal chat for new
visitors

1pm: Meal

2pm: Discussion/possibility of
forming an East Anglian branch

3pm: Discussion of ADM items

3.45-4pm: Recent and future activity.

The Conservatory, back room of The
Rosary Tavern, Rosary Road,
Norwich



Fifty Years Ago

TROUBLE IN SCHOOL

Few of us have seen a jungle but all of us know, from the adventure stories we read in childhood, what a jungle is like. It is a dark, dangerous agglomeration of weird flora and horrid fauna, where the natives are permanently hostile. Fang, claw and poisoned dart lie in wait and savage, malignant creatures leap, crawl and slither everywhere, all the accompaniment of war-whoops and gibberings.

And that, according to recent accounts, is how things are in school these days. At the same time as "The Blackboard Jungle" was first shown in this country, the News Chronicle (early in September) published "Jungle in the Classroom," a series of three articles in which Dr. John Laird reported on London's secondary modern schools. Five of these schools comprised Dr. Laird's jungle: they are, he claims, typical of the rest. In them

children run amok; teachers are resisted, ridiculed, even assaulted; educational standards are almost incredibly low. About 30 per cent of the children leave school "unable to read much beyond the level of an eight-year-old child, and unable to write a letter that would be easily deciphered."

Not surprisingly, there were indignant denials. "Sensational and one-sided," wrote Sir Ronald Gould, of the National Union of Teachers; "fantastically distorted . . . absurdly untrue." The Secretary of the London Head Teachers' Association. An official of the London County Council affirmed their view; so did most of the teacher who sent letter to the News Chronicle. Few, however, dealt with the facts, and certainly none mentioned that Dr. Laird is not the first to have said all those things: little more than a year ago a novel called "Spare the Rod" painted a similar picture of secondary modern schooling and wrung from the Times an admission that "it probably has some truth

in it."

The secondary modern school is the lowest, most prolific unit in the State educational system of this country. It looks after the children between 11 and 15 who have not passed scholarship examinations, whose parents cannot afford private school fees or don't care anyway. It sets out to impart the minimum of necessary knowledge and inculcate a number of basic social attitudes. To say that is not to accuse the ruling class of conspiracy, but simply to point to what education means in any society: the equipment and adjustment of the young for what they have to do.

(From an article by R. Coster,
Socialist Standard, November 1955)



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



The Respect That Makes Calamity

When was it that Tony Blair decided that Respect would be an attractive, vote-catching election theme? Was it a long time ago, before he had felt the first stirrings of political ambition and was merely a rebellious, disrespectful schoolboy? Or later, when he was safely ensconced in Downing Street and his son was collected from a West End gutter after disrespectfully celebrating the end of his exams? Whatever the truth of this, the theme now looks about to become another New Labour obsession. Here is Blair, speaking on the steps of Number Ten after his victory in the 2005 election, vowing to bring back "A proper sense of respect in our schools, in our communities, in our towns and villages". And here is Charles Clarke, a Labour Home Secretary doing his best to forget his past as a stropky left winger: "Tackling disrespect in our society is an absolute priority for the government".

Blair has made it clear where he thinks the blame lies for any shortcomings in this matter: "it is in the family that we have to come to terms with the idea of give and take and respect for other people". And what if the family does not come up to these expectations? Well, "People need to understand that if their kids are out of control and they are causing a nuisance to the local community, there is something that is going to happen". And that "something" is to apply Parenting Orders, now to be extended and strengthened, which force parents to be instructed in how to bring up their children - teaching them to respect others, give up their bus seat to an old lady, stand up when the national anthem is played, always wear their full school uniform and obey the general laws and orders of capitalist society. If the parents succeed in this and their kids behave in an orderly, respectful way, Blair will be a happier man and, the argument runs, New Labour will win yet another election.

Straw

This is all very well, but as a spokesperson for the children's charity Barnado's pointed out, it is not only children who are the cause of nuisance behaviour and it is not only in family homes and schools that the problem reveals itself. There was the recent example of Labour Party member Walter Wolfgang, who was so lacking in respect for figures of power and authority that he recklessly called out, slumped in his seat at Labour's conference, that Foreign Secretary Jack Straw was a liar. At the time Straw was only doing his job, giving the conference (which was very sparsely attended at the time) the Labour Party line, perhaps flavoured by a Foreign Office brief, that Iraq was attacked in order to get rid of Saddam Hussein and establish a modern democracy there, whatever the Iraqi people thought about it. Now, the Foreign Secretary holds one of the great offices of state, is a person of considerable influence and standing in society (although in the unusual case of Jack Straw his standing, for reasons connected with the ruthless game of politics, is rather lower than is the custom) who should command respectful silence when he is telling lies. It is no excuse for Wolfgang to argue that he was carried away by the contrast between Straw's original doubts about the invasion of Iraq and his passionate support of it now. It is an essential of being respectful to keep extremes of emotion - like outrage at a blatant, cynical betrayal - strictly under control.



Walter Wolfgang

It was especially unwise of Wolfgang to interrupt Jack Straw who, when he was Home Secretary, was liable to become excited in discussing the symptoms of social disturbance. It was Straw who first publicly condemned the "squeegee bandits" - people who, without the driver asking, cleaned the windscreens of cars which were halted at traffic lights. We never did hear what happened to all those dangerous criminals who went about their nefarious business with wet sponges in their hands - and Straw forgot about them as well. Then he complained about his evening drive home from the office being marred by the spectacle of young people out on the streets later than a respectable Home Secretary thought they should be. That particular neurosis lingers on, in the ASBOs and the campaign about respect. And it was Straw who had to take his son to a police station after he had been exposed by a tabloid newspaper for offering controlled drugs for sale. Not, in other words, someone for Wolfgang to tangle with. It is just as well that Straw was so effectively protected from him.



Former ASBO tsarina Casey

Casey

Unfortunately, when Wolfgang embarked on his one-man campaign to wreck Labour's conference there was not enough time to refer him to his local branch of the new anti-social behaviour units (of which more later), with a view to cracking down on his parents who, as Blair has told us, must be held responsible for raising so disruptive a character. This was clearly considered an unrealistic option when Labour's

spin doctors were told about Wolfgang's age. So it was entirely appropriate - indeed there was no other way - for a couple of impressively beefy, enthusiastically respectful, Labour Party members who had volunteered to police the conference, to eject him from the hall. Along with another member who was disrespectful enough to protest at an 82-year-old man having his collar felt in that way. Perhaps now Wolfgang, like other offenders against the law, will be taught to keep his place by being deprived of his state benefits under the rules dreamed up by David Blunkett, who used to be Home Secretary but is now in charge of the Department of Work and Pensions.

Meanwhile the new task force with the job of teaching respect to people who heckle government ministers is getting down to its vital work. At its head is Louise Casey, who was already in charge of the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit. Her new job requires her to "focus" (a word much loved by New Labour hopefuls) on "working together on the neighbourhood renewal and anti-social behaviour agendas, highlighting respect for others and respect for the community." Whatever talents Casey can bring to this task, sensitive public relations is not among them. A few weeks before her new appointment, when she was merely the ASBO tsarina, she informed an audience of Home Office staff and senior police officers that "Doing things sober is no way to get things done...I suppose you can't binge drink any more. I don't know who bloody made that up. It's nonsense...There is an obsession with evidence-based policy. If Number Ten says bloody evidence-based policy to me one more time I'll deck them and probably get unemployed."

Questions

All over the country breath will be bated while we learn what kind of "respect" Casey will introduce us to. Wolfgang will probably be particularly apprehensive. Meanwhile Labour has been most generous in its response to his deplorable lack of respect for one of their senior politicians. One minister after another queued up to offer their humblest apology to him. Party chairman Ian McCartney went so far as to promise to take him out for a meal - a traditionally pacifying treat for stropky pensioners - although whether eating in company with the myopically loyal Labourite McCartney would be nutritious and mollifying, or further punishment, was not clear. As the dust settled it had to be asked whether the apologies and the threatened dinner with McCartney were motivated by the fact that the Labour stewards had so clumsily committed their assault on Wolfgang in full view of the TV cameras. For some viewers it was reminiscent of Mosley's infamous fascist rally at Olympia in 1934. If there had not been the same damning TV exposure, would all those ministers have been so eager to grovel?

There are other questions which need to be asked in the whole matter of "respect". What kind of "respect" was shown by Jack Straw when he changed his mind over something as important as the war in Iraq? What sort of "respect" is shown by the Blair government's drive to undermine the established legal rights of people who are arrested by the police? And on the other side, what degree of "respect" do we find in the attitude of someone like the heckling Wolfgang, who undisturbedly keeps his membership of both CND and the Labour Party, although he must know that there is no prospect of this government, or any future Labour government, agreeing to throw away their nuclear weapons? Let it be clear. Having respect for people and our environment - acknowledging and caring for each other's strengths, needs, weaknesses, ambitions - is not compatible with capitalism's essentially competitive, repressive nature. Capitalism makes heroes of those who rise to the top, no matter how ruthlessly they achieve that. Tony Blair, for example, did not get where he is by allowing himself to be diverted through any respect for truth and human interests. And then what about the people - the working class - who in their millions support capitalism's political parties through thick and thin, disaster and triumph, contempt and respect? They need to understand that in the mouth of a politician "respect" is a fine but meaningless word. Unhappy and disillusioned people like Wolfgang should know this because they have experienced "respect" at the sharp end. ■

IVAN



Voice from the Back

THE RICH GET RICHER

"The US's richest tycoons increased their personal wealth in the past year, with the top 400 worth \$1.13 trillion (£640bn), says Forbes magazine.... To make this year's list of the top 400 fortunes in the US a minimum net worth of \$900m was required - up from \$750m last year." (BBC News, 23 September) The old popular song "Ain't We Got Fun" cynically stated "The rich get rich and the poor get children", but it is no laughing matter.

YOUR TWO CENTS WORTH

An analysis of the gap between the rich and poor in Manhattan by Dr Beveridge of the City University of New York is revealing. "Income Disparity in City Matches Namibia. Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue is only about 60 blocks from the Wagner Houses, a public housing project in East Harlem, but they might as well be light years apart. They epitomise the highest and lowest earning tracts in Manhattan, where the disparity between rich and poor is now greater than any county in the country. ... The top fifth of earners in Manhattan make 52 times what the lowest fifth make - \$365,826 compared with \$7,047 - roughly comparable to the income disparity in Namibia. ... Put another way, for every dollar made by households in the top fifth of Manhattan earners, households in the bottom fifth made about 2 cents." (New York Times, 17 September)



BIG SPENDER

"The minute he walked in the joint, they could tell he was a real big spender. ... By the time he left the Aviva bar in the five-star Baglioni Hotel in Kensington, West London, on Thursday night, he had spent nearly £36,000. He bought 851 cocktails, emptied the place of



Louis Roederer Cristal champagne, and gave a waitress a £3,000 tip. (Times, 1 October) This hedge fund manager from New York spent £16,500 on champagne and £6,000 on a variety of cocktails. It can be safely assumed this high-roller does not live in the Wagner housing project in East Harlem.

DOUBLETHINK

According to George Orwell in 1984, doublethink is the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. This spectacular mental gymnastic feat seems to have been accomplished by Karen Hughes, a public relations spokesperson for President Bush in her recent trip to the Middle East. Trying to sugar the pill for her Turkish listeners she came out with this classic of Doublespeak. "To preserve peace, sometimes my country believes war is necessary." (Observer, 2 October)

PROGRESSING BACKWARDS

Some years ago the press and TV was full of conjecture about the wonderful leisure-based life we would have inside capitalism. Futurologists and other media pundits speculated that with the advance of technology we would all be working fewer hours and fewer days per week. The big problem of the future would be how to spend all our leisure hours. Such scenarios have proven completely wrong with many of us now working longer hours and now it seems probably working for many more years. "The state pension age should be raised to 70, the Confederation of British Industry says in light of new figures detailing extended life expectancy." (Times, 4 October)

THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR

In an edited extract from *Maxwell's Fall: An Insider's Account* by Roy Greenslade we learn something of the contempt the owning class feel for the working class. When Maxwell took over The Daily Mirror he wanted to speak to Kelvin MacKenzie then the editor of The Sun but his secretary reported that MacKenzie would not accept his call. "Maxwell demanded that the secretary relate the conversation in full, but she

was hesitant. "No, no, no," screamed Maxwell. "Tell me everything he said." She said she would prefer not to, but Maxwell shouted: "You will not get into trouble, Patricia. But if you refuse, you will be in trouble." "Well, Mr Maxwell, he said, "I don't want to speak to the fat Czech bastard." Two weeks later Patricia left in tears, escorted from the building by a security man (Times, 6 October).



THE DECLINE OF RELIGION

It used to be an argument of supporters of capitalism that socialism was impossible because of the working class's adherence

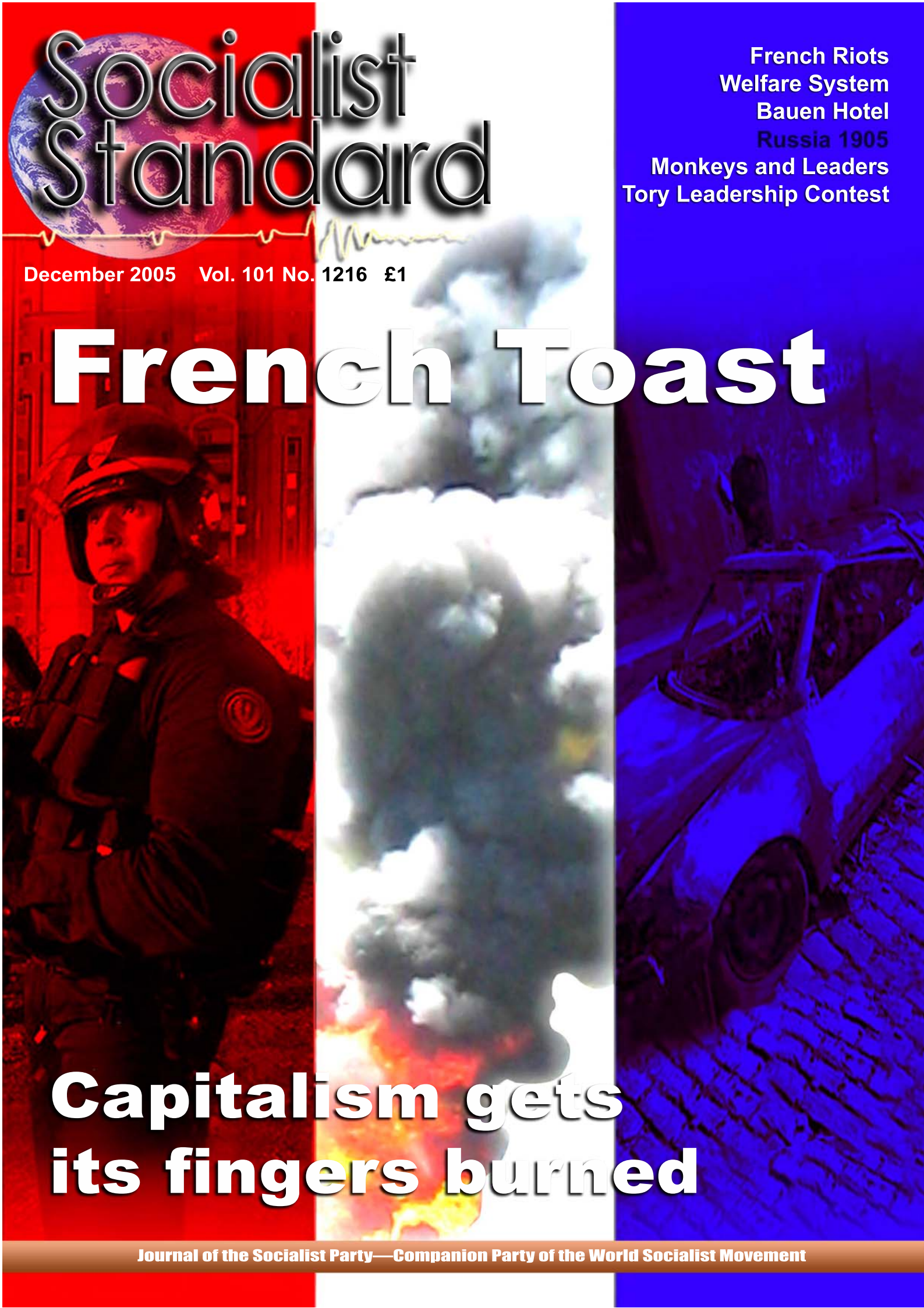


to religion. A recent article by the columnist Magnus Linklater seems to give the lie to that notion. "Whereas in 1851 between 40 and 60 per cent of the population went regularly to church, today that figure is less than 7 per cent. In recent years the trend has accelerated - by 28 per cent in the last 20 years for the Catholic Church, and 24 per cent for the Anglican Church; in Scotland, the fall has been so dramatic that the once all-powerful Kirk reported recently that it could well be extinct as an organisation within the next 50 years." (Times, 13 October) Any other arguments against socialism?

Free lunch

by Rigg





Socialist Standard

December 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1216 £1

French Riots
Welfare System
Bauen Hotel
Russia 1905

Monkeys and Leaders
Tory Leadership Contest

French Toast

Capitalism gets its fingers burned

Journal of the Socialist Party—Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement



Search and destroy: The riots in France, pages 6-8



Demonstrators heading to the Winter Palace, 1905. Page 12



Tailcoated twit? Boris Johnson, page 19

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REGULARS

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"It says something about the Tories' panic that they should promote an MP as inexperienced (although practised in cynicism) as Cameron as the man to become prime minister"

Greasy Pole, page 19

The Unemployed Riots in France

Following the death in the last week of October of two teenagers electrocuted while trying to avoid a police identity card check, riots broke out in the suburb of Paris where they lived. These soon spread to other suburbs of Paris and then to those in other cities of France. Police were stoned, cars set alight and fire engines attacked, night after night, for three weeks.

Most of the rioters were the children or grandchildren of workers who had come to work in France from its former colonies in North and West Africa. This led some to see the riots as another aspect of some Islamic attack on "Western civilisation". Predictably, the notorious French racist politician, Jean-Marie Le Pen, said it was all due to immigration.

Actually, in a sense, it was a revolt against "Western civilisation", but not by Islamists. It was a revolt by unemployed youth, living in rundown estates with the worst amenities, against the fate capitalism has imposed on them. Certainly, most of the rioters were nominally Muslims and the children of recent economic migrants, but essentially they were workers who had been thrown on to the scrap heap even before they had had a job.

Insult was added to injury by the French interior minister talking about people on the estates as "riff-raff" and about "cutting out the gangrene" and "cleaning by pressure hose". He maintained he was only referring to drug dealers and petty criminals but this was not how it was perceived on the estates.

Capitalism needs a reserve army of unemployed, to exert a downward pressure on wages as well as a source of readily-available extra labour-power that can be called upon during the expansion phase of the capitalist economic cycle. In addition, there is always a surplus population who, for various reasons, are never going to be employed. The level of state "benefits" paid to these non-working sections of the working class is fixed more by political than economic considerations, basically by



what the state can get away with without provoking riots.

In France the state has evidently pushed a section of these workers too far. The result has been a revolt against the state as represented by the police, the fire brigade and public buildings. The French state has replied in kind. Sending in more police, declaring a state of emergency, imposing curfews, handing down severe sentences including deportation to countries convicted rioters are supposed to

have "come from" but have never been to. Of course, in the end, the state will win and the riots will be put down. After the repression, however, the state will spend a little more money to improve amenities and job prospects on the estates, the price of avoiding further costly and damaging unemployed riots.

But what a comment on capitalist civilisation! In a world which has the potential to provide a decent life for everybody, a section of the population is driven to riot just to get a slightly less small pittance to live on.

Rioting, though perhaps understandable, is not the answer. What is required is not blind rage but that the quite legitimate rage of these victims of capitalism should be accompanied by an understanding of the situation capitalism has put them in. Capitalism causes - in fact, requires - some workers to be surplus to requirements and suffer above average social exclusion. Once this is understood, then it will be realised that the constructive

thing to do is to work for a new society in which having to obtain money, by hook or by crook, to acquire what you need to live will be a thing of the past.

A society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of life where enough for all will be produced since satisfying people's needs will be the sole aim of production. A society where everyone will be "socially included" because we're all fellow human beings. ■

SUMMIT'S UP

At first there was NAFTA, then there was FTAA - or rather, there wasn't, because talks to establish the Free Trade Area of the Americas have got bogged down in disagreements. The North American Free Trade Agreement, between the US, Canada and Mexico, came into force in 1994. Its declared aims were to eliminate trade barriers between the three countries involved and increase investment opportunities. In fact, it is far more about investment than trade, allowing US and Canadian factories to be moved to cheap-labour areas in Mexico and opening up further chances for privatisation. But it was always seen as a first step only, and the FTAA, which would extend to most of Central and South America and cover 34 countries, is the logical conclusion, originally intended to come into effect at the start of 2005.

The FTAA has many opponents. The nasty right-wing super-nationalists in the John Birch Society (see www.stoptheftaa.org) view it as part of the ongoing abolition of the United States, opening up borders to all sorts of criminals, terrorists and other undesirables, doing away with US sovereignty and creating a European Union-style integrated political unit. This isolationist conception does not fit in with that of the rulers of the US, however. There have also been opponents from the 'left', largely from the anti-globalisation or global justice movement (see www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/ftaa/, for instance). They point to the effects of NAFTA in cutting wages in Mexico and increasing threats to the environment and public health. FTAA, they claim, will just be the same thing, writ larger.

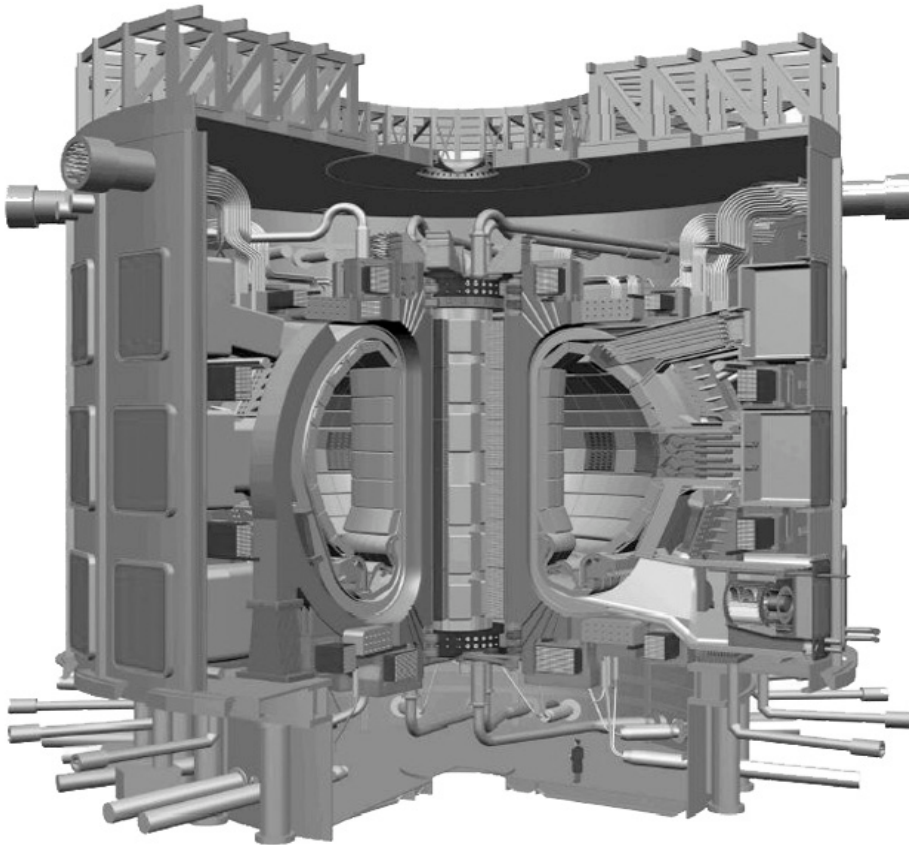
In early November the Summit of the Americas was

held in Argentina, partly to see how FTAA could be put back on track after the rulers of some countries objected to it. In the meantime, smaller groupings have been pushed forward, such as the Central America Free Trade Agreement (due to start in January 2006) and the Andean Free Trade Agreement (which is still under negotiation). The US is also particularly interested in expansion of the Panama Canal, which carries 14% of US foreign trade, so that it can handle more and bigger ships. But the Summit did not give the green light to FTAA, despite Bush's threats and arm-twisting. A handful of countries stood out against it, including Venezuela, where oil resources give the rulers a bit of bargaining freedom (see the November *Socialist Standard*). So now things are being left to the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Hong Kong in the middle of this month.

The Argentinian Summit was marked by protests and police crackdowns, together with the usual populist anti-American pronouncements from Presidents Chavez of Venezuela and Lula of Brazil. Clearly, many workers are unconvinced that a policy is in their interests just because it suits Bush, his fat-cat backers and the American capitalist class in general. But nobody raised the real issues about the way society is run.

The truth is that arguments about 'free trade' or 'fair trade' or any other kind of trade completely miss the point. All variants on trade accept the idea that food, clothing, housing etc. should be bought and sold rather than freely available. They also accept that the earth should belong to a small class of owners rather than being the common property of all its people. They all accept the existence of capitalism rather than rejecting it entirely as Socialists do. ■

Nuclear Con-Fusion



A cut away diagram of ITER

Few situations demonstrate the reactive nature of central government better than the energy question. Faced with a popular tide of opposition to new nuclear build on the one hand, and the utter impossibility of meeting the 40% energy shortfall expected in the next two decades with renewables, it's easy to see why Blair's government is desperate to keep treading the fine wire of non-commitment. When in doubt, do and say nothing, and maybe tomorrow the situation will change.

It wasn't always so. Nuclear fission energy was once the Philosopher's Stone of science that was to herald a brave new world of clean and efficient energy for all time. But the optimism didn't last long, and in the wake of Windscale 1957, the Silkwood affair, and later Three Mile Island and, catastrophically, Chernobyl, the public infatuation with this futuristic technology was well and truly over. Nowadays the questions they should have asked back in the 50's come easily to the lips of the general public - who says it's safe, who says it's cheap, and what about the waste?

But western capitalism is in a bit of a fix, because, quite apart from any fluffy consideration of fossil fuel emissions and the ozone layer, the real issue is that the remaining deposits of oil, coal and gas are largely under the control of Russia and China. Solar, wind and wave energy contribute only a tiny fraction of the national grid and never look likely to manage more than 20 per cent even in the government's wildest fantasies.

Some excitement has been generated recently over the decision to start building the ITER nuclear fusion reactor at Caderache in Southern France, something of a coup for the EU and one in the eye for Japan, who has been arm-wrestling for the right to host this plant for years. Fusion, it ought to be pointed out, has made some progress in recent years. Gone are the days when it consumed vastly more energy than it produced - the new larger reactors have seen to that. And it's remarkably clean and efficient. Instead of burning fossil fuels and releasing their stored electromagnetic energy, you fuse heavy hydrogen isotopes together and

in the process unleash the vastly more powerful force that holds protons and neutrons together - about 10 million times more powerful. Best of all, the main waste product is helium, which is useful for balloons, airships and at staff Xmas parties for giving the managers squeaky voices, but is otherwise a non-toxic, inert element.

So what's the catch? The ITER plant is not even a prototype reactor, it is a pre-prototype, designed to test whether the materials and construction can stand up to the sun-like 100 million degrees centigrade necessary for nuclear fusion to occur. Nobody knows if the material can take it, and until they do, nobody would dare build a real reactor. So we could still be looking at fifty years before fusion is contributing anything to the national grid. So, in the meantime, it could be back to good old filthy fission.

What is, for a socialist, strange to the point of comical in all this, is that in all the energetic debate about the pending energy crisis, when all the ageing reactors are closed down and there's nothing to replace them with, nobody, not one politician, or media pundit, or social commentator, ever suggests that we just take a forty per cent drop in energy consumption and live with it. How can we continue to live the nightmare life of the motorway commuter without petrol? Oh no, we can't possibly give that up, we'll have to use hydrogen. How do we continue to have all our cities' department stores lit up every night like Christmas trees so people can window-shop at 4 am? Dread thought that consumers should have their nocturnal browsing habits constrained, we need to develop fusion technology. How do we keep selling the public more and more energy? Simple, we persuade them to live in 'smart' houses where even the tin-opener discusses Kant.

Capitalism is not, of course, really interested in saving energy. Energy companies could offer customer discounts to those who were frugal, but in fact that's not the way to make money. Some years ago a group called CORE (Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment) demonstrated that it was possible to provide cavity-wall and loft insulation for every house in England and Wales for less than the cost of one nuclear power station, and at a net energy saving greater than that produced by the same nuclear power station. So saving energy is not the point, using as much as possible in as profligate a way as possible is where the money is at, which fact demonstrates, as few situations can do better, the reactive nature of capitalism and the inability of common sense to prevail where the cash incentive is concerned.

Human Nature

Dear Editors,
I'm aware that Socialists often have to face the criticism that Socialism is against human nature. According to this point of view human beings are naturally selfish and acquisitive, even when they have enough to satisfy their own needs. There would certainly seem to be plenty of apparent evidence for that point of view. I thought you



might appreciate a section I came across in "The Neurotic Personality of Our Time" (1937) by Karen Horney (left):

"The irrational quest for possession is so widespread in our culture that it is only by making

comparisons with other cultures that one recognises that it is not a general human instinct, either in the form of an acquisitive instinct or in the form of a sublimation of biologically founded drives. Even in our culture compulsive striving for possession vanishes as soon as the anxieties determining it are diminished or removed."

Horney saw "the irrational quest for possession" as one of a number of ways in which people try to cope with feelings of anxiety, and not as an expression of "human nature".

She rejected over-generalised ideas about "human nature" and recognised how diverse people are in their attitudes and behaviour.

ADAM WATERHOUSE, BRISTOL

Buying Life's Essentials

Dear Editors

The aim of capitalism is to sell. I remember that in the 1939/45 war if we had food, warmth and shelter we wanted nothing, so I try to restrict my buying to essentials.

M. B. A. CHAPMAN, BATH.



Essential: a pre-war corner shop

We're not too sure about this. If it caught on, employers would be able to pay us all less.

Humanism

Dear Editors

Permit me to comment on your book review of *Postmodern Humanism* (November). The British Humanist Association was founded in 1896 and not as stated in 1963. A founding member was Charles Bradlaugh MP and when I ceased to be a member in 1997 there existed links with South Place Ethical Society, Rationalist Press Association and National Secular Society.

I shall not comment on the reviewer's claim "they still seem to be working out what their positive case is beyond promoting a non-religious but still ethical approach to life". But I do assure you that they have taken

an active role in the promotion of a large network of funeral celebrants and likewise for wedding and naming ceremonies. Whether these activities exist with the same momentum today, no doubt the book's author (as a member of the North East Humanists) is better able to judge.

E. HIRSCH, HOCKLEY, ESSEX.

According to the British Humanist Association's own website, they were founded in 1963. It was another body, the Ethical Union, with which they are now associated, that was founded in 1896.

Africa: a Marxian Analysis

A 30-page pamphlet written by socialists living in Africa consisting mainly of reprints from *The Socialist Standard*. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis is applied to:

- State and class in pre-colonial West Africa
- Tribalism
- Colonialism and Capitalism
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Merde in France



force is mainly installed in the quiet small towns, the spatial deployment of the flics having stayed largely unchanged since the Vichy epoch. The police trade unions have resisted all attempts at redeployment. As a rule then, the cops only come to thump people they don't know in areas they get lost in.

Calm "middle-class" areas have a plethora of police stations. Earlier experiments with community policing

Wednesday 16 November was a quiet day in France. Only 163 cars were burnt by urban rioters in the whole of France and the state of emergency was lifted in some places and re-imposed in others. The urban unrest of the last two weeks is fading away, leaving some dead - the guy attacked for trying to defend his area from arsonists; some injured - the disabled woman set on fire in a bus by thugs, the 18-month-old baby who received a rock on the head and a whole lot of mindless vandalism: cars burnt, schools burnt, buses burnt, kindergartens burnt, shops smashed and so on.

The death of the two young lads who were accidentally electrocuted when they ran into an electricity sub-station in Clichy-sous-bois north of Paris following an all too routine police identity check in the area was not in itself the trigger to these events. The trigger was the reaction of the Interior Minister, Sarkozy, (France's answer to Blunkett, marital problems included) who called the unruly young people in the suburbs "riff-raff", thus confirming a tendency towards the blanket stigmatization of the population who live there.

The equation suburbs = immigrants = delinquents, is, of course, the kind of brainless reasoning favoured by members of the National Front, and by some police officers, particularly those who "know" the immigrant population largely through their experience of the dirty Algerian war of independence. But the "immigrant" population in the suburbs have been there for three generations and as such they walk around with French identity papers. Unfortunately for them, they have Arab names and/or black faces and thus face discrimination in employment. Their problems are a concentration of those faced by French workers as a whole and have nothing to do with their level of

"integration" into the French nation. After all, those Arabs who fought for the French during the Algerian war of independence (the so called "harkis") have themselves vegetated in ghettos, the victims of post-colonial benign neglect. Even these Arabs haven't been allowed to integrate.

Can of worms

The background to this can of worms is not the state of the housing in the sink estates ("cités") in the suburbs of the major towns in France. Some of the housing, admittedly not all, is of fairly good quality having been built in the mid-1970s. British sink estates are a lot worse. Nor is the problem that of the absence of public services, education, health care, public transport and all the rest. These public services are present in these areas to an extent which could only be dreamt of in an equivalent American or British ghetto. Let's not get things mixed up. No, the main problem of these sink estates is precisely the social and ethnic homogeneity of these areas or the concentration of people with profound social problems there. Family breakdown, sole parenting, low self-esteem, educational difficulties, problems of employment co-exist with an often violent social environment where young people grow up surrounded by delinquent gangs.

To make matters worse, the French police

("police de proximité") undertaken by the "socialist government" of Jospin succeeded in calming the suburbs but were abandoned by the super-cop Sarko on the ground that this allowed the proliferation of a parallel drug economy (true). In these terms, the more testosterone-propelled policing of the current administration is believed to be more effective (not true). As a result policing in the suburbs has taken on the "wham bang and thank you mam" style with lots of media attention.

Funds going to the associations in the suburbs have been cut and job-creation schemes suspended. This is guaranteed to worsen community relations with little payoff in terms of the fight against thugs whose activities do, after all, provide some cash-flow in these areas where youth unemployment often hits 45 percent - the highest rate in Europe. No wonder then that the government has decided to park the riot police (CRS) on a semi-permanent basis in these estates. Although country bumpkins with a well-deserved reputation for brutality, they do at least know how to react



when they get lost in an area they don't know.

"Arab work"

In strictly capitalist terms nothing can nor perhaps will be done to change this sorry state of affairs. The current population of the suburbs largely consists of the sons and daughters of black Africans and Arabs brought over in the 1960s and 1970s to do the shit jobs in the factories that the French didn't want to do. (A reality which was brought home to me when I saw an entire train full of exhausted workers returning from a night shift at the Peugeot works in Poissy. They were all Arabs.) Whilst this earlier generation now subsists on microscopic pensions and social benefits, the new kids on the block are showing a distinct tendency towards underemployment and delinquency. When mass unemployment hit these areas in the 1980s what complacent sociology calls the "visible immigrants" found themselves trapped and underemployed in the suburbs as the earlier ("invisible"?) immigrants of Spanish, Italian, Polish or Portuguese origin had succeeded in getting the hell out. Integration after all is not so much a question of religion as it is a question of timing.

Then came the trendy do-gooders who



this outfit provides a convenient bogey-man for lefties who have got lost in the banality of left/right capitalist politics. The party, generously staffed by disaffected former colonists from Algeria (the so-called "pieds noirs"), has heavily underlined the failure of integration of the French citizens of Arab origin many of whom, incredibly, still don't know how to conjugate the subjunctive of the imperfect in French and this after so many grammar lessons. The party even has a radio station called, curiously, "Radio Courtoisie" (Right wing French thugs have always had impeccable manners) to beam out its Christian message of hatred and prejudice. Fortunately, only bored housewives and retired colonels listen to this drivel.

Ordinary French workers have proved over and over again that they are not on the whole racist bigots, though they can be a bit xenophobic. Nonetheless the party continues to garner votes in constituencies where it doesn't even have a local branch or even any kind of grass-roots



in the mid-1980s launched the windy humanistic movement "Touche pas à mon pôte" ("don't touch my mate") with the help of heavy public subsidies from the Mitterrand government, "the Sphinx" having abandoned all pretence to defend working class interests sometime early in the 1980s. Ostensibly a worthy movement aimed at overcoming the problems faced by those French citizens who were unfortunate enough to have Arab or black parents, this current of thought succeeding in convincing gullible people that the real problem faced by people in the sink estates was the entrenched racism of the French and not simply shit jobs, unemployment and a brutal and ignorant police force: problems faced by workers everywhere.

Vomitorium

The other side of the political rainbow has seen the development of a far-right extremist party, the National Front, from out of the moribund Poujadist organisation of the 1950s. Led by Jean Marie Le Pen, an ex-paratrooper involved in dirty business during the Algerian war of independence,

existence. For the party exists in fact, as a convenient way for workers to express their disaffection with the French political establishment which is all too clearly in cahoots with capitalist interests. It's a kind of gigantic publicly-subsidized vomitorium into which people spew their bile with Le Pen's ugly mug providing a convenient emetic. In doing this, however, French workers have clearly been playing with fire. Now they're getting burnt.

Urban pariahs

Thus doubly confirmed in their status as urban pariahs, many of the young people in the suburbs have continued to study quietly and find work despite an ill-adapted educational system, material difficulties, postcode discrimination, the useless condescension of the politicians and crap jobs. The educational priority areas ("zone éducation prioritaire"), modelled on the earlier British fiasco, have been starved of resources and have thus done little to erode the inequalities of an overtly elitist educational system. They receive a piddling 8 percent more than the mainstream

schools, hardly enough to compensate for the learning difficulties encountered by people from poor backgrounds, not to mention those from non-French speaking backgrounds in a country where national arrogance places on premium on speaking proper.

Despite the difficulties there are some fine, dedicated teachers in these areas whose efforts have been hampered by a sordid social environment and poor logistic support. In the final analysis then, 62 percent of French working-class

people find their offspring back in the working-class background which they came from (the highest proportion in Europe) in a country which presents itself as secular and meritocratic. And that's before we put the peculiar problems faced by the denizens of the ghetto into the balance.

So the real problem is the inability of people in these areas to escape from a highly stigmatizing spatial set-up. The association suburb = immigrants = delinquency is criminal stupidity. The Arab and black populations who live in areas in close proximity to mainstream French life do not riot. Nor did the Arabs who live in the centre of Marseilles. (In the same way quiet Alsatian villages with no Arabs vote National Front.) Where the sink estates did not riot is more important than where they did but no television cameras go to these areas. In fact, the vast majority of the third generation immigrants in the suburbs took no part in the disorders and many were as terrified by what went on as the French population in general.

The problem should not be thought of simply in terms of spatially delimited sink estates. The wider trends of the whole of French society should be taken into account. To a significant extent, the troubles should be seen as a reflection of the growing geographical segregation of the French population partly due to the booming housing market and the continuous rise in rents in the private sector.

And the doings of the affluent in France should also be mentioned. The rich are beginning to privatize the French republic for their own ends. Rich ghettos, like Sarko's own constituency of Neuilly to the west of Paris has only 2 percent of council housing when the legal obligation is for 20 percent. The same is true of neighbouring Levallois and the pattern is repeated all over France. Clearly the rich are having some difficulty integrating into the Republic, perhaps they don't want to. After all, they send their kids to private, often catholic schools, where they learn how different they are from everyone else. Thereafter they take advantage of higher education facilities to propel their horrendous offspring into the better jobs. A short sojourn in the States completes the picture.

More importantly, recent events have allowed the government to sneak through controversial tax breaks for the super-rich whilst introducing more tax free enterprises into the sink estates - but then again, perhaps, this was what was really at stake in the first place. ■

MM (Paris)

Report from Paris

We have received the following report on the recent riots in France as seen by a migrant worker there.

At the end of October there was a heavy riot in the suburbs of Paris as a result of a police identity card control. Three African immigrants, one from the west coast and the other two from North Africa were controlled by police around Seine Saint Denis in one of suburbs of Paris. There was a disagreement between the immigrants and the police on duty. So, the three immigrants raced for safety but, unfortunately, two ran into a high tension compound and were electrocuted. Another one ran in a different direction and alerted his friends to what happened. Before they could trace the two boys and call the fire service to rescue them, it was too late.

These suburbs have been neglected, segregated for people of the same ethnic and religious background, for the past thirty years. Some of those living there who acquired good skills in one trade or the other were denied a job opportunity because of their colour, location of their residence or Islamic names. An English adage says that an idle man is the devil's workshop. Since these immigrants were denied social and economic integration into French society, they devised what means of livelihood they could in order to keep the body and soul together. For many years French society has regarded them as outcasts and vagabonds who have no value just because of their colour and fate.

When this incident happened the Interior Minister of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, a hardliner and the son of an Hungarian immigrant, supported the action of the police and said that they were on a drive to control criminals and drugs in those suburbs instead of showing compassion and regret over the death of the two African immigrants. After his television broadcast, these immigrants, comprising black Africans and the North Africans, plus their sympathetic friends from Asia, Latinos, West Indies and other Europeans, joined hands in the riots.

On the second day of the riots, the Interior Minister bragged that he would beef up the police to one thousand to control the situation. And that night about eight hundred cars were burnt excluding houses. The riots started from Seine Saint Denis around Paris and spread all over France. These cities are Bordeaux, Nantes, Toulouse, Tours, Belfort, Essonne, Roubaix, Strasbourg, Lyon, Vaucluse, Besancon, Aulnay, Marseille, Amiens, and many more cities in France.

The cost of the damage in the three weeks of riots in France amounted to €200 million, just because of racism, xenophobia, and segregation that was imposed on immigrants by capitalism. And this is the country that propagated a disguised colonisation to third world countries under the pretence of a policy of association and assimilation. And today their fake paradigm programme is exposed to the world for us to know the danger in capitalism.

On 11 November, BBC radio reported that the European Union Justice Commissioner, Franco Frattini, told France to integrate its ethnic minorities in order to avoid further such occurrences. On 13 November, the same EU gave €50 million to France to rebuild their country. They had forgotten to pass the message across to other EU member states that prevention is better than cure.



Franco Frattini - more integration



To my greatest surprise, on the streets of Paris and other cities that I visited in France many French people confessed in front of the television cameras that they had never seen riots like this in their life. And these were just riots with petrol bombs and stones thrown by few boys! And I asked myself, what if they had seen the genocides from Biafra to Rwanda that imperialism caused, because of its egocentric intent, at the expense of poor Africans in particular and the third world countries at large.

What is happening in France today should be a lesson to nations like Belgium, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

As a socialist propagandist, I hate vandalism, I believe in peaceful social and political dialogue. But, when people take the law into their hands, that means that they have been oppressed beyond bounds and they are prone to explode. And their explosion can result to rioting, rebellion, terrorism and sometimes total anarchy.

At this juncture, EU should use its tongue to count its teeth and know that the Fortress Europe has brought severe damage to France

and that many more riots are on the way to other EU member states that have refused to open up their immigration policy that encourages marginalised 'illegal' immigrants. Immigration policy in the West is based on corrupt western politicians conniving with the third world politicians; as a result, immigrants continue to cross borders and seas no matter what the risk ahead.

Sarkozy is a man who believes that he can become the President of France in 2007 by fighting immigration. Capitalism has blindfolded the world that our level of forgetting things is quite enormous. If not, how can some political riff-raff like Nicolas Sarkozy of France and the Belgium Interior Minister Patrick Dewael be propagating what their forefathers could not achieve years ago? These two sycophants are looking for cheap popularity in their political party because they live in the land of the blind that have eyes but cannot see. They will bring woes to the entire population of these two nations.

Lastly, I am advocating that the only solution that will enable people of different race to live in peace is socialism. And capitalism should be eradicated without further delay to enable us to enjoy the beautiful things of the world without fear. ■
Dele C. Iloanya, Paris



Sarkozy - after cheap popularity

The workfare state: enforcing the wages system

The changes which have taken place in what passes for welfare provision in Britain over the course of the last two decades were analysed in a book by Chris Grover and John Stewart, *The Work Connection: The Role of Social Security in British Economic Regulation*, that came out in 2002. Largely inspired by Marxist economics, it represented a lucid account of a domain where the harsh economic realities of capitalist exploitation contradict the illusions of reformist politics.

In many ways these illusions were fed by the extraordinary ideological success of the post-war Beveridge reforms, frequently presented as the triumph of half a century of reformist action led by Liberal, Labour and - to a lesser extent - Tory administrations. Any remaining illusions are now being dissipated. What welfare coverage and rights existed in the immediate post-war period are now being whittled away or simply done away with in order to more closely serve the form of capital accumulation which is now on the agenda. This new 'inevitability of gradualism' - to use the term adopted by the



Pauline and her pens - from a classic TV satire on the state's relentless humiliation of the unemployed

Webbs - means more exploitation and fewer rights of access to the means of subsistence for anyone unfortunate enough to have to try to find work for a living.

There never was a golden age of the welfare state. The history of income maintenance in Britain has been the history of coercion, discipline and surveillance. As the first functioning capitalist country, England experienced the workhouse test, 'less eligibility' and the doctrine of 'deterrent'. It's still one of the most miserly and punitive 'welfare systems' in Western Europe, although the other European countries are now catching up. (New rules in France mean that workers on the dole have fewer rights to refuse poorly paid jobs, the same is happening in Germany and Spanish workers are forced to be more mobile in the search for work. Whether the government is right or left changes nothing.)

However, now a new layer of social control has been added since the advent of British 'workfare', a policy loosely based on American precedents. In the past, maintaining labour discipline was a fairly simple task. Unemployment insurance benefits tended to be low compared to average wage rates. In a buoyant job market, the only workers who wanted to stay on the dole for a long period were the genial layabouts of the claimants' unions, people who were using benefits to finance studies on the sly, actors 'resting' between roles and artists etc. In this situation, it was relatively easy to identify workers who were dodging work although, in practice, control procedures against the so-called 'scroungers' were not applied systematically. Nobody really had an interest in staying on the dole for too long but some did, much to the horror of *Daily Mail* readers.

The situation has now changed considerably. Successive governments have been trying to lower the wage levels of unskilled and semi-skilled workers (so-called 'entry-level' jobs) putatively in order to combat inflation. American ideas about the so-called 'underclass' popularised in the highly toxic pseudo-sociology of Charles Murray have replaced the episodic scrounger-bashing campaigns orchestrated by the Tories in the 1970s and 80s. Thus, whereas in the past the unemployed (now known as 'jobseekers') could refuse offers of work which didn't correspond to their levels of skill or even standard trade union rates, now they are hassled into poorly paid jobs as quickly as their legs can carry them. This, in itself, has a particularly depressing effect on wage levels especially in the more lowly-paid occupations.

To make this process go even faster both Conservative and Labour administrations have introduced benefits to workers in low-paid jobs (in-work benefits) modelled on the Family Income Supplement set up in 1971 by the appalling Keith (later Sir Keith) Joseph, a Thatcherite bovver-boy and closet eugenicist. Officially, in-work benefits provide incentives to unemployed people - pardon, 'jobseekers' - to take on poorly paid jobs and to leave the



supposedly luxurious world of inactive welfare dependency. In actual fact, subsidies to low paid jobs tend to have a depressive effect on wages. Employers know that they can get the labour power they need for less cash, the state stepping in to make up the difference. And of course, the increase in the number of workers coming onto the labour market increases supply and lowers price.

All this continues unabated under New Labour, indeed, with many subtle and often cruel refinements. These include the fine combing of the population of the partially disabled and their gradual inclusion in the reserve army of labour and the particularly brutal treatment meted out to lone mothers. Of course, New Labour has introduced the national minimum wage albeit on an extremely low level. But this only means that over the long-term the depressive forces working on wage levels will result in the legal minimum becoming the maximum paid out for unskilled work, the trade unions having been weakened by two decades of legal meddling.

In the final analysis, welfare administration is really only the problem of



policing the frontier between the reserve army of labour - people who are on hold for later exploitation - and the surplus population - people who are simply maintained at low cost outside of the labour market. 'Labour market activation' - the trendy term for these new policies - is really about making some formerly excluded workers available for a spot of exploitation. Social welfare policies don't solve the underlying problem of capitalist exploitation. But then again who would ever look to the Labour Party or New Labour to solve that problem? ■
MM

In November anti-capitalists were urged, via email, to send a letter of protest to the President of Argentina about the threat to evict the workers cooperative, set up by former employees, that took over the bankrupt Bauen Hotel in the centre of Buenos Aires two years ago and has been

running it ever since.

When in December 2001 the Argentine economy and currency began a melt-down many small and medium-sized enterprises went bankrupt or were simply abandoned by their owners. Faced with joining the already huge and growing army of unemployed,

workers in some of these businesses took matters into their own hands. They occupied the workplace and resumed production on their own account.

At the time some saw this as the beginning of a social revolution in which the workers take over the factories and organise production without the bosses. A more sober assessment was that this was workers, in a crisis situation, reacting in a pragmatic fashion to try to ensure that they had some source of income to maintain themselves and their families. But it did at least show, to any who might not have realised it, that workers can organise production without bosses.

This was not really a mass movement, but it currently involves some 200 enterprises employing in total a maximum of 10,000 people, i.e. the average "recuperated enterprise" as they call themselves (recuperated, that is, from bosses regarded as undeserving or even thieving) is one employing about 50 workers. And 10,000 less unemployed is a drop in the ocean compared with the total number of unemployed in Argentina which, even today, is still over 2 million.

The authorities, not wishing to aggravate an already disastrous economic and financial crisis, accepted this situation as a fait accompli and passed a law allowing workers cooperatives to play a part in rescuing failed businesses. Under this law, local and regional authorities were empowered to compulsorily acquire a failed business and authorise it to be run by a workers cooperative for up to two years pending a settlement with other creditors (the workers themselves were often also creditors in respect of unpaid wages) or the former owners. Some recuperated enterprises went down this road. Others negotiated a lease with the former owners, which of course involved paying them a share of any profits. Others continued to operate outside the law.

The two years are now coming up, and with the Argentine economy having recovered a little and the social and political situation stabilised, the authorities are beginning to enforce the law, which gives property rights over a business either to the former owners or their creditors. A number of businesses taken over by the

workers in 2002 have already been recuperated back from them. Now, it appears, it is the turn of the Bauen Hotel.

Evicting the bosses and organising production without them is one thing; escaping from the economic laws of the market is another - as, within capitalism, it is not just a question of organising production, but also of selling what is produced. Because of their precarious legal position, the workers cooperatives running a recuperated enterprise have been at a competitive disadvantage. They can't get proper bank loans and, because ordinary capitalist businesses are not too keen to deal with them, often have to sell to them via a go-between (who naturally demands a share of the profits).

What the workers cooperatives, some of which are organised in a Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas, are now demanding is a stable legal framework; basically, that the state or regional or local authorities compulsorily purchase the business they are running and legally hand it over to them. Thus, the petition to the President of Argentina on behalf of the Bauen Hotel cooperative calls upon "the Argentinian government and its legislators to act immediately to . . . pass a law of definitive expropriation in favour of the Workplace cooperative B.A.U.E.N."

Apart from wanting to secure their own position, the broader vision of those behind the Bauen cooperative seems to be an economy based on a network of worker-owned businesses. Even anarchists in Argentina, who might be expected to look favourably on this, have criticised it:

"Cooperativism does not provide a real solution to the workers' situation. It is incapable of providing an answer in the interests of all workers. At no time does it question the capitalist production relationships - it questions only superficial features (monopolies, competition, etc.). Even less can a network of cooperatives create a parallel subsystem to capitalism" (www.zabalaza.net/phorum/read.php?f=2&i=156&t=156).

Yes, cooperatives can only ever involve a minority of workers, and the more they are integrated into the capitalist economy and its profit-seeking, the more their



Members of the workers cooperative, with the Bauen hotel behind

Argentina's Worker-Run Factories: What Next?

members will have to discipline and pressurise themselves in the way the old bosses did - what used to be known as "self-managed exploitation".

The Trotskyists have another solution. According to an article in the October Le Monde Diplomatique:

"During 2002 there was a lively debate on whether revived businesses should get involved in capitalist markets. A Trotskyist minority called for nationalisation under worker control. It took over four businesses, including Brukman, a garment factory in Buenos Aires, and Zenon, a tile manufacturer in Neuquén. The workers involved saw the rescue as a first step towards a socialist system in which the state would control economic planning. The hard-left parties associated with them did not believe that cooperatives could survive in a capitalist market" (mondediplo.com/2005/10/13survey).

It is certainly true that cooperatives will never be able to outcompete ordinary capitalist enterprises, but the Trotskyists' alternative of the state subsidising the recuperated enterprises, without requiring them to compete in the marketplace, just to provide jobs is even more unrealistic - and has nothing to do with socialism. (It is more than likely, however, that this is just another of the Trotskyists' dishonest "transitional demands" which they know can't be achieved under capitalism but offered as bait to obtain a following for their vanguard party.)

The fact is that there is no way out for workers within the capitalist system. Not cooperatives, not reforms, not trade unions. At most these can only make their situation a little less unbearable. As long as capitalism lasts workers will have to find a source of money one way or another

and so will always be in a dependent and precarious position.

But a number of lessons can be drawn from the recuperated enterprises movement in Argentina.

Firstly, that built into capitalism is a class struggle between those who own the means of wealth production and those who don't and who are therefore forced by economic necessity to sell their ability to work to those who do. This class struggle is not just over the price and conditions of sale of the commodity workers are selling. Ultimately, it's about control over the means of production.

If, as happened in Argentina after the economic melt-down of December 2001, capitalists abandon their factories or, as happened in Russia in 1917, Spain in

“cooperatives will never be able to outcompete ordinary capitalist enterprises“

1936, and Hungary in 1956, the capitalist state is temporarily incapable of protecting capitalist property, then the workers more or less spontaneously take over their workplaces and keep production going. Workers are not going to let themselves starve: if the means of production are there, and there's no state to stop them using them, they'll go ahead and use them, even if they have no revolutionary pretensions. However, as soon as the state has got its act together again, then it is in a position to confront the workers and re-

impose access to the means of production only on its terms.

Which leads to the second lesson: the importance of who controls the state. At the moment, in Argentina as elsewhere, this is in the hands of people favourable to the continuation of capitalism, itself a reflection of the fact that most workers too don't see any alternative to capitalism. The state, therefore, upholds legal private property rights. The importance of political power is in fact fully recognised by the recuperated enterprises movement. This is why they are calling for the law on property rights to be changed so as to recognise the property rights of the workers cooperatives which are running recuperated enterprises; which will only happen if they can get the elected law-makers to do so, either by pressuring them from outside or by electing ones favourable to a change in the law. This is why, too, they want people to petition the President of Argentina.

The end of capitalism can only come as a result of a consciously socialist political movement winning control of political power with a view to abolishing all capitalist property rights and ushering in the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. The preconditions for ending capitalism are a majority socialist consciousness and workers democratically self-organised in a large-scale socialist party. Neither of which, unfortunately, existed in Argentina. Which is why the recuperated enterprises movement there has proved a dead-end and why the workers cooperatives it gave rise to are now forced to compromise and integrate themselves into capitalism to survive. ■

ADAM BUICK

Cooking the Books (1)

Pensioned Off

According to the government and the capitalist media, there is a "pensions crisis" in that, given the growing proportion of retired people in the population,

the capitalist class is not going to be able to afford to maintain pensioners at the same level as existing ones. Therefore, the argument goes, people must set aside more of their current income to purchase future pension rights. And they must retire later.

It seems to make sense. If there are more retired people compared to those at work, surely that must mean that those at work have to work more and/or consume less? This would be true but for one thing: it ignores the point that over time productivity increases, even if only fairly slowly. This means that more wealth can be produced by a workforce of the same size, out of which, in theory, both current wages and future pensions can be maintained at the same level as today.

"In theory" because the fact that this could happen is no guarantee that it will. But it does show that the capitalist class can't plead poverty here. They can afford to

maintain pensions at current levels.

That this is so was confirmed in a report, The Ageing Population, Pensions and Wealth Creation, released on 31 October by a pro-business think-tank, Tomorrow's Company. According to the BBC News of that day:

"One of the report's authors Philip Sadler said there was no 'ageing crisis'. 'As a society we can afford to grow old,' he said. 'Rising productivity will outweigh any negative influence on living standards from an ageing population.'"

The report asked "how can a working population that is expected to remain around 27 to 28 million create sufficient wealth over the next 35 years to support an additional five million pensioners?" and answers:

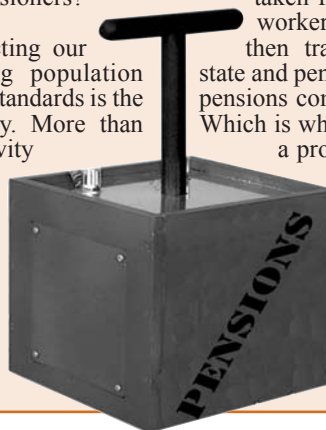
"The main factor affecting our ability to afford an ageing population without the erosion of living standards is the impact of rising productivity. More than anything else, rising productivity explains the paradox that ageing societies have simultaneously become wealthier. At a mere 1.75 per cent productivity growth per year, by 2045, an average British worker will be about twice as productive as today. In other words, a doubling of

new value and resources being produced while the number and share of over 64s grows by less than 50 per cent."

What is interesting in a report from a pro-business lobby is that it acknowledges that it is the "working population" who are the "wealth creators" rather than the usual guff we get from such groups about entrepreneurs being wealth creators. Wealth can only be created by human beings applying their mental and physical energies to materials that originally came from nature.

But they do write as if there was a direct transfer from the "working population" to the pensioners. In fact, this only happens indirectly, as the wealth is taken from its direct producers, the workers, by the capitalist class and then transferred by them, via the state and pension funds, to pensioners. So pensions come out of profits, not wages. Which is why how to pay for pensions is a problem for the capitalist class.

However they solve it, what we get will never be enough to compensate for a lifetime of exploitation.



One hundred years ago this year there happened a series of events in Russia, culminating in a general uprising in December, that Trotsky called 'the dress rehearsal for the revolution of 1917' and which in terms of bloodshed were far more violent than the actual events in St. Petersburg twelve years later.

1905: the first Russian Revolution

Russia at the time was a predominantly agrarian country. 80 per cent of its inhabitants were peasants, eking out a very meagre existence from the soil. They had been emancipated from being serfs in 1861 by a decree of Tsar Alexander III but peasant understanding of personal ownership in land remained very rudimentary. After the 1861 emancipation act there arose a widespread and deeply held belief among the peasants that at some time in the future a redistribution of land was going to happen. This belief made them a very volatile and potentially revolutionary class, although they had no political aims and could see no further than land.

Whereas in Britain and most of Europe at the time, a strong nobility had limited the power of the monarch, allowing a rising capitalist class to develop. In Russia, Tsar Nicholas had absolute power. He ruled under a system called patrimonialism, in which everything belonged to the Tsar. He was absolute monarch and nothing could change without his consent. There was no parliament or constitution. Government officials were directly responsible to him, and he believed firmly in upholding this system, much as Charles I of England believed firmly in the divine right of Kings. This meant in practice that the growth of capitalist industry in Russia was limited and largely reliant on foreign capital. Consequently the indigenous capitalist class was very weak.

As a result of this weakness the path to a political and legal set-up in which capitalist development could flourish was undertaken by the 'intelligentsia', a concept peculiar to Russia. Comprised largely of university students, lawyers, and artists (i.e. writers) it was more or less open to anyone who was against the patrimonial set-up. And because Tsar Nicholas was extremely rigid in his outlook and frightened of any change that could limit his power, democratic protest from the 1870s onwards was not an option. Protest became channelled into the form of violence, with assassinations of government officials taking a prominent part. A movement, openly committed to assassination, called the People's Will came into being, attracting the support of much of the intelligentsia, including, for a time, Lenin. Some thousands of

government officials were killed; assassination became a way of life.

The response from the government, backed by the Tsar, was repression, to clamp down ever more tightly. The use of whips by the police to quell student strikes did not endear the government to those who wanted change. At the close of the 19th century with the setting-up of the Okhrana, Russia became the first police state in history. It was riddled with secret police infiltrating agents into most of the anti-Tsar organisations. Various political parties had developed by this time, with varying aims, ranging from the establishment of a parliament and a constitution to establishing socialism. The exact nature of what they meant by socialism was never really stated, but probably boiled down to some kind of nationalisation, with tight government control. Around this time many of Marx's early writings had arrived in Russia and Marx was very popular, but not much understood. Funnily enough *Capital* was allowed by the censor who thought it was so dreary no one would read it, but mostly Marx's writings were smuggled in.

By 1905 there were three major political parties loosely representing different class interests. They were the Democratic Constitutional Party (Kadets) (bourgeois), Social Democratic Labour Party (working class or proletariat in the language of the day), and Socialist Revolutionaries (roughly, peasants and workers).

Tactics varied from assassination, advocating strike action, to 'leading the workers to the dictatorship of the proletariat' but all were agreed on the necessity to remove the Tsar. From the 1890s onwards things were growing tense. Conditions of work in the factories and railways were abysmal, with very low wages, working hours of twelve to fourteen hours a day and appalling living conditions, much like they had been a few years earlier in Britain's industrial revolution. There were many very large factories in Russia employing up to six thousand workers, attracting thousands of unskilled peasants. They were mainly housed in rapidly built barracks crammed in four or five to one room, quite a few of those employing a night shift saving on bed linen by having the night and day shifts use the same bed.

A meeting of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Lenin is centre, Martov second from right





From left: Martov; Palace Guards preparing to fire at protestors; Stolypin

As usual, as a result of hasty building to accommodate large numbers of workers sanitary conditions were practically non-existent with open sewers in St Petersburg and Moscow and the consequent health risk, the usual concomitants of capitalism in its early stages.

In 1903 the Social Democratic Labour Party held a conference in London to draw up fresh rules (largely to contain the split in their ranks between those following Lenin and those supporting Martov). Lenin was insistent on the need for a tightly integrated, disciplined party of professional revolutionaries. Martov was in favour of a more open, less disciplined party with much easier access to membership. The conference led to a decisive split, roughly down the middle but with a slight edge to Lenin. From that time on these two sections were known by the name of Bolsheviks (majority) and Mensheviks (minority), leading to open conflict between these groups, played out fifteen years later at the time of the deposition of the Tsar and the Bolshevik rise to power.

So, at the turn of the century there existed a highly critical situation. An all powerful and inflexible, but nevertheless weak, Tsar, a poorly organised and ill-developed native capitalist class, a peasantry in rebellious mood but non-politicised, and a small as yet unorganised working class, not political, whose aims were confined to improving working conditions. On the fringe a party of professional revolutionaries whose aim was to lead the proletariat as their 'vanguard', but as yet had minimal influence. Something had to give! In 1905 it did.

In 1904 Russia went to war against Japan, in a war that was partly territorial, and partly, as most Western historians seem agreed, a bid by the Russian government to distract attention from current difficulties and unite the population in a patriotic fervour with a resounding victory. Unfortunately for the Tsar it didn't work, as there was an even more resounding defeat. The general public lack of support for the Tsar fell even lower. More large-scale strikes ensued, and then, in 1905, there happened an event only too common in the struggles of the working class to gain justice.

Trade unions had been disallowed up

till then in Russia but the government had been experimenting with police-led unions in an attempt to take the heat out of workers discontent. One of these was a union led by a priest, Father Gapon. Father Gapon thought it a worthy idea to lead a march in St. Petersburg to appeal to the Tsar, following the commonly-held belief in countries with a very powerful head that their father figure is unaware of the sufferings of the population and will intervene to put them right if only they can bring their problems to his attention. On Sunday 22 January some 150,000 people gathered in St Petersburg and marched on the Winter Palace where it was believed the Tsar was in residence. It was a peaceful protest, many were carrying icons, none were carrying weapons; they believed the Tsar would listen. They were

“any worthwhile progress in human society must come, and can only come, from the working class”

met by troops who opened fire. The death toll was estimated at 200 killed and 800 wounded, reminiscent of many other panic reactions by governing bodies to peaceful working class demonstrations, Peterloo, Tiananmen Square among them. Support for the Tsar fell even further from then on.

Bloody Sunday, as it was thereafter called, opened the floodgates and the country was in turmoil. Strikes, demonstrations, outbreaks of violence were the order of the day. Eventually it was reluctantly agreed to inaugurate a constituent assembly called the 'Duma'. This was set up and delegates were voted in, many of them peasants, but it never had any real power. In the mind of the Tsar it was only a sop which he intended to revoke as soon as the opportunity presented itself.

The conservative reaction to this concession was extreme. A party was set up, the Octobrist party, which encouraged

mob violence against supporters of the Duma. Government-inspired pogroms against Jews resulted in thousands of deaths and much homelessness. A wave of strikes broke out, peasant violence against their landlords escalated, similar to the French peasant violence and destruction of chateaux in another bourgeois revolution. The country was approaching a civil war. The appointment of a new minister of the interior, Stolypin, brought some ease to the country. His reign of repression consisted of setting special courts, which would have no compunction about passing the death sentence. So many were hanged that the nickname 'Stolypin's neckties' became popular. He was eventually assassinated - at the opera, in front of the Tsar.

On the positive side, Stolypin initiated land reforms that were meant to be progressive but are generally agreed as having no great effect. The country gradually settled down, though never completely, and from around 1908 to 1914 there was a mild boom, with an increase in capital development.

Was 1905 a revolution? Not really. It was more a revolt, by large sections of the population against savagely repressive conditions, and by the nascent capitalist class to establish the freedom to operate. But there was no proposal to change the basis of society and each element, the peasants, the bourgeoisie, the nobles were paddling their own canoe. There was only one way they could go: capitalism. At best it was a rebellion, but one that had a profound influence on a similar uprising twelve years later which did change the basis of Russian society by completely uprooting Tsarism.

There are many lessons to be learned from this one episode in a period of violent change. One is that any worthwhile progress in human society must come, and can only come, from the working class. Relying on our rulers to initiate worthwhile change is as useless as the Russian peasants' reliance on the Tsar. But above all is the fact that no force can cut short the natural development of society until it is ready for change. ■

CYRIL EVANS

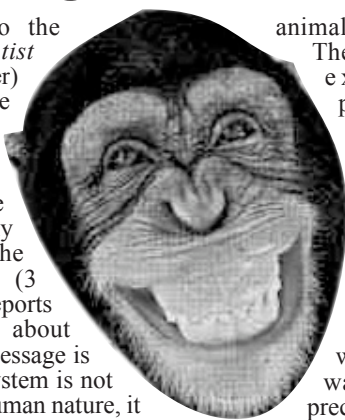
Monkey Business

According to the *New Scientist* (5 November) some monkeys can be taught to be captivated by capitalism. The research is gleefully popularised in the *Daily Mail* (3 November). The reports don't actually talk about capitalism but the message is clear - the money system is not only embedded in human nature, it also goes back to monkey nature.

Apparently scientists at Yale University conducted experiments on capuchin monkeys showing that they can be taught how to use money and even master the art of shopping for bargains. They learned to use silver discs as coins to buy pieces of apple and cucumber from the researchers. When the apple slices were made "cheaper" than cucumber - meaning more apple was offered for the same amount of money - they opted for the better-value apple.

The monkeys then resorted to underhand tactics to hold on to their cash - by hiding the real coins and offering up "counterfeit" coins made of cucumber. They also showed a gambling streak, enjoying a game which enabled them to win or lose prized grapes on the flip of a coin.

Fascinating stuff. But the *New Scientist* report didn't tell the whole story. Some of the more intelligent monkeys went on to figure that they were living in an



animal class society. The human experimenters possessed all the means of production and distribution: the laboratory, the stockpile of silver discs, the food rations for the workers. All the monkey-workers could do was earn a precarious living by doing various tricks to please their masters in return for food portions.

So the class-conscious monkeys got together and decided the only way to achieve their emancipation was to mount a revolution. They conveyed to the researchers where they could put their silver discs. Instead of access to the means of life only by earning discs, they decided to build a new and classless animal society in which all monkeys and researchers would stand equal in regard to the means of wealth.

The experimenters didn't like the prospect of being dispossessed of their wealth and privilege. They threatened to use armed force to put down the revolution. Fortunately this turned out to be an idle threat. Although a few lumpenmonkeys briefly took the side of the experimenters, the vast majority saw that the new system of production for use and free access was in the best interests of all animalkind. ■

SRP

Don't take me to your leader

The subject of leadership has been much in the news recently. The Labour Party conference breathed fresh life into the ailing story of how long Tweedleblair will hang on to the top job, thus denying Tweedlebrown the juicy fruits of office. The Conservatives, trying hard to find a leader who will last more than 15 minutes, have engaged in a drawn-out beauty contest long on candidates but short on beauty. Even leaders need their leaders - George Dubya is reported to have said that he was instructed by God to invade Iraq.

The socialist view on leadership is quite simple and straightforward. We don't need leaders and can do very well without them. Socialists are neither leaders nor followers - we are participants in the socialist movement and will be social equals in a socialist society.

That is not to say that some of the qualities sometimes associated with leadership will not be relevant in socialism. Today we rightly reject the idea that the Socialist Party has a leader, but it does have a General Secretary to carry out certain democratic functions. Similarly, we don't have leading writers or

leading speakers, but we do have an editorial board and a procedure to test members who want to speak publicly on behalf of the Party.

Leadership is not to be confused with exercising initiative. The Socialist Party as an organisation, and socialism as a future society, both need people who will start something or improve on what exists. Thus the fresh design and layout of the Socialist Standard since the beginning of this year was the result of a few members using their initiative, responding to what they saw as a need and supported democratically by the Party as a whole. The same applies to *Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff*, the first of what is intended as a number of socialist DVDs.

For socialism celebrities are out, while developing everyone's potential is in. If someone paints a number of acclaimed pictures, gives excellent theatrical performances, makes an outstanding contribution to a particular branch of science, they will no doubt be recognised - but they won't be worshipped as demi-gods. ■

STAN PARKER

Cooking the Books (2)

Who needs the rich?

To be one of the idle rich these days £1 million is not enough, according to the private bank, Coutts & Co., who specialise in dealing with the accounts of such people. The "super-wealthy", said Coutts' chief executive Sarah Davies, was "a person who didn't have to work if they chose not to, and who was able to lead a life of luxury" (Times, 18 October).

Twenty-five years ago £1 million would have allowed you to lead a life of luxury, defined as having a 5-bedroom house with two staff, an apartment and a yacht in the south of France, eating out twice a week in a posh restaurant, and going on three two-week holidays to a luxury destination. To lead such a life today you need, apparently, some £3 million.

Nobody could amass that amount by working. Those that do possess such a fortune will have got it either by inheriting it

or by wheeling and dealing in the City or in property speculation, as a look at the Sunday Times annual Rich List confirms. In other words, they can only lead their life of luxury on the proceeds of the exploitation of those who do work. They are not the only ones doing this since the "fat cats" at the top of private and state industry who pay themselves bloated salaries and bonuses are at it too.

A million pounds is still a lot of money of course and would still allow a person not to work if they chose not to, though not the sort of life of luxury just described; rather not much above the average of the rest of us. But it's a measure of how non-rich most people are - and so have to go out onto the labour market to find an employer - that there are only 425,000 millionaires in Britain, which is under 1 percent of the adult population.

It couldn't be otherwise of course, since the basis of capitalism is the wages system and, to work, the wages system requires that most people are forced by economic necessity to sell their mental and physical energies as the means of obtaining money to buy the things they need to live.

One old socialist definition of a capitalist was a person who has sufficient

wealth and unearned income from it to avoid having to sell their ability to work. In other words, someone who plays no part in producing the wealth of society but lives off the backs of those who do. The pro-capitalist economist Keynes called such people "rentiers" and looked forward to their gradual "euthanasia".

In Russia after 1917 they actually did this. The idle rich were dispossessed without compensation and went into exile. Some people thought that this meant the abolition of capitalism. But it didn't: capitalism continued without them, but run by the state.

The lesson of this was that if you abolish the super-wealthy and the idle rich you don't necessarily abolish capitalism. Capitalism is essentially an economic system (of capital accumulation out of the surplus-value obtained by exploiting wage-labour). It is this impersonal economic mechanism that wage and salary workers are up against and which involves their exploitation irrespective of who manages the system or benefits from it (whether private capitalists or those who directly control the state). It is this system, not the idle rich as such, who are only a by-product of it, that socialists are out to abolish.

My road to Socialism

In this strange system that received opinion holds to be democratic, who gets to be represented and to what degree? When I was living in "The People's Republic of South Yorkshire" I wasn't the right age to vote, but given the chance I would have succeeded in backing the winning candidate (the only time in my life), little realizing that although he would have been my representative in Parliament he would have represented me very little.

Later, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, being over 21 at last, I got my chance to put my X and did so feeling that now I could make my mark. What an exhilarating feeling, to be able to make a difference! With hindsight it's easy to see I was wrong in two ways; (1) that a vote for Labour would count for anything in that constituency, and (2) that, even if my choice had been elected, he would actually represent any of my core principles. But I kept on hoping and putting my X (my democratic responsibility) whilst actively demonstrating how I thought the world should be - in Grosvenor Square (US Embassy) against the Vietnam war, at the South African Embassy against apartheid, in Trafalgar Square with CND - you name it, I was there. All this whilst studying for a degree so I could get a good job. Big trouble with the Principal for trying to recruit a few fellow students at my 'seat of learning' into a students' union. How terrible, we would have had access to cheaper books and tickets to concerts.

The 'good job', teaching, spanning a good number of years, led

to more militancy. Must show solidarity, join the union, march for better conditions, withdraw participation in voluntary activities, work to rule. Life seemed to be one long struggle for the things I believed in. Meanwhile, a move to Kent and maybe I could try 'strategic' voting. Could I help to keep a particular candidate out rather than failing consistently to get mine in?

In the job (sorry, profession) a 'restructuring' of the pay scales and an apparent promotion yielded an actual pay freeze. Forget the 1250 hours that had been negotiated and hard won; now the schools started 'opting out' and going 'Grant-Maintained' (even the decent canteen grub took a knock with privatisation). This led to newly qualified teachers being interviewed for posts asked such loaded questions as "How late in the evening are you prepared to stay on the premises?" and being given the kudos of an 'acting-up' post for a year in the wild hope of a salary increase the following year for work already done.

Glad to be out of that rat-race. Lots of very happy and satisfying classroom experiences; as for the rest of it.

Now I'm an 'ex-pat', an 'economic migrant' with no vote and no representation in my adopted country. I am my own representative, wholly responsible to myself and my community. Moreover, I have come to the full realization that I have shed my last skin and can confidently say I know what it feels like to have emerged as a fully-fledged socialist. ■

JANET SURMAN

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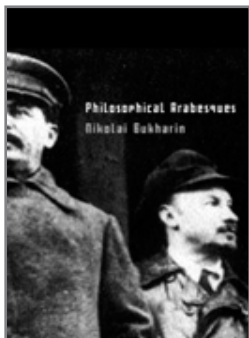
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Dead man writing

Philosophical Arabesques. By Nikolai Bukharin. Pluto Press. 2005. £35 (hardback)



While Bukharin was in prison, awaiting the show trial that would lead to him being sentenced to death and executed in 1938 on preposterous, trumped-up charges of sabotage and treason, he chose to spend the time writing books. One of these was on philosophy. It was found in the Kremlin archives after the fall of state capitalism, published in Russia and now in English translation.

Bukharin was one of the more interesting and able of the Bolsheviks. Even before the Bolshevik seizure of power he had written a couple of books which are quite acceptable as an expression of a Marxist point of view: *Imperialism and the World Economy* and *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (a criticism of the Austrian school of marginalist economics), both written in 1914 when he was 26. After the Bolsheviks came to power he was an obvious candidate to codify Bolshevik theory; which he did in *The ABC of Communism* (written with E. Preobrazhensky) (1919), *The Economics of the Transformation Period* (1920), and *The Theory of Historical Materialism* (1921) which are sophisticated defences of Bolshevik theory and practice using Marxian terminology and concepts.

As a member of the Politburo, Bukharin also played a political role. In the struggles amongst the Bolshevik leaders following the death of Lenin in 1924, he supported the policy of consolidating the Bolshevik regime internally (as opposed to trying to foment world revolution) favoured by Stalin and most members of the Russian party. In fact, as editor of *Pravda* in the 1920s, it fell to him to come up with a theoretical defence of this policy. It can even be said that he, even more than Stalin, elaborated the theory of "socialism in one country" so reviled by Trotskyists.

To do so he had to identify "socialism" with the state sector of the economy, i.e. with what he had once called "state capitalism" (he had temporarily been one of the "leftist blockheads" denounced by Lenin in 1918 for opposing the Bolsheviks' economic policy of the time as "state capitalism": of course it was state capitalism, retorted Lenin, adding that, what's more, state capitalism would be a step forward for economically backward Russia). He opposed the adoption of Stalin's policy of forced industrialization and collectivisation of agriculture in 1929 and so fell from favour, but remained a leading figure in the regime. However,

once Stalin decided in the mid-1930s to eliminate all potential rivals he was a doomed man.

Perhaps surprisingly, *Philosophical Arabesques* represents a return to his earlier Marxist approach to things, in the tradition of Plekhanov who wrote extensively on materialism and problems of philosophy. He does follow rather slavishly Lenin's philosophical views as expressed in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* (1908) and *Philosophical Notebooks* (1915), but these were not all that different from those of other pre-WWI Social Democrats in the Marxist tradition. The trouble was that Lenin was intellectually intolerant and in his 1908 book violently denounced other materialists, who didn't agree with his version of materialism, for being not materialists but crypto-idealists, solipsists (people who believe that only their self exists) and what he called "fideists" (religious).

Thus, it is rather offputting to find in the opening chapters of Bukharin's book the 18th century Scottish philosopher David Hume described as a "subjective idealist" and a "solipsist", whereas all he had done was to question whether or not such a thing as absolute knowledge was possible (a proposition also challenged, even if from a different angle, by dialectics). Hume - and the others in the British empiricist tradition which includes Bertrand Russell and AJ Ayer, both declared atheists - were not "idealists" in the sense of believing that the outside world only existed in the mind and were certainly not so mad as to think that only they existed.

They are certainly open to criticism for their approach of starting from the point of view of an isolated philosopher sitting in his study trying to work out, on the basis of his personal sense-perceptions, if he really can either know or believe that the outside world and other people exist; instead of from the point of view of humans living and producing as a social and socialised group - a criticism Bukharin also makes of them, pointing out that the fact that the isolated philosopher uses words to think shows in itself that other humans must exist since language is a product of human society. But to call them names that suggest they deny the existence of a world outside the human mind is absurd, in fact a display of ignorance.

Bukharin is more at home with German philosophy (which really was idealist) - Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Hegel. Although he mentions Hegel in every chapter, he provides a balanced view of his system, warts and all (and some of the warts were enormous) and of what Marx took from it as its "rational core".

Basically, what Marx retained and applied to the real world as opposed to the world of ideas was (1) that you should not judge by empirical appearances alone (otherwise you might think that the Sun went round the Earth) but try, by theoretical analysis, to get at what might be behind them, (2) that everything is an inter-related part of the whole that is the universe, and (3) that everything is in a constant process of being transformed into something else, but that this change is not

always continuous but involves leaps and breaks. Add to this the traditional materialist view, that non-living nature preceded living forms of nature, that as an animal capable of abstract thought and consciousness of self humans evolved from animals without this capacity, and that mind and consciousness cannot exist apart from a living body, and you have "dialectical materialism".

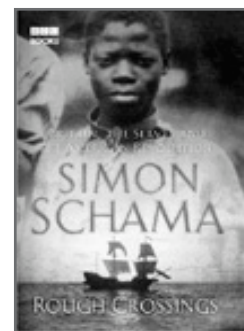
Whether dialectics is the basic law of motion of the universe (as Bukharin argues) or a human description and interpretation of what they observe in nature remains a subject of debate, even amongst Marxists.

Bukharin's book would be of interest merely as the writing of someone who knows he is soon going to be killed but it is also worth reading in its own right as a work of philosophy. Bukharin obviously thought this an important subject to choose it as his last writing. He even asked to be executed by poison "like Socrates". Stalin let him be shot.

ALB

Hypocrisy Exposed

Simon Schama: Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution. BBC Books £20.



Forget Schama the TV historian - this is a solid piece of research into a sordid piece of British and American history from the late 18th and early 19th century. The European colonists in America rebelled against

their British rulers, leading to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. This was the period of slavery and the slave trade, and many black slaves (and 'free' blacks) saw through American protestations about liberty and supported the loyalist (i.e. British) side. Some black people fought on the patriot (American) side, though slaves were excluded from the American army and giving arms to any black people was anathema to many, especially in the south.

But once Britain had been defeated, the question arose of what would happen to these black 'loyalists'. Some escaped slaves were recaptured by their owners, but most managed to avoid this dire fate and were given certificates by the British commandant of New York, stating that they were free to go where they wished (i.e. they were no longer slaves and subject to the orders of their owner). In 1783 many loyalists, both white and black, were shipped off to Nova Scotia to start a new life. But the 3,500 black settlers there were subject to appalling discrimination, being always last in line for such things as food supplies and allotment of land.

Consequently, many of the former

slaves travelled (in some cases, returned) to Africa, specifically to what later became Freetown in Sierra Leone. Under the initially somewhat paternalistic regime of the Sierra Leone Company, they attempted to establish a settlement of their own where they could produce their own crops and trade with local chiefs. In principle, everything was run democratically, with each head of household having a vote, including women. Says Schama, 'the first women to cast their votes for any kind of public office anywhere in the world were black, liberated slaves who had chosen British freedom'. But this freedom was illusory: in 1800 the black residents of Freetown rebelled against mistreatment but were savagely put down, by a Company army partly consisting of Maroons (former Jamaican slaves who now fought on the British side). Two of the leaders were hanged.

Schama effectively exposes the hypocrisy of the rulers on both sides. The British government scoffed at the Americans' pretensions to freedom while owning other human beings, and Americans condemned a system where the poorest inhabitants of British cities were little better than slaves. He also brings out the courage and tenacity of slaves and ex-slaves who fought for some dignity in their lives.

PB

Stopping Short

Derek Wall: Babylon and Beyond: the Economics of Anti-Capitalist, Anti-Globalist and Radical Green Movements. Pluto Press £14.99.

This is a textbook-like survey of various trends in the anti-globalisation movement. As such, it covers a great deal of material in less than 200 pages, from avowed supporters of capitalism such as Joseph Stiglitz to autonomists like Toni Negri, via Naomi Klein and (but why?) Major Douglas and social credit. There are too many direct quotations, and too many typos (e.g. references to Lenin on imperialism as 'the highest state of



Derek Wall

capitalism'). But not many readers will be familiar with all the writers and activists mentioned here, so the book does serve a useful purpose, though it is scarcely a full guide to the ideas of particular thinkers. On the whole Wall summarises other views rather than expressing opinions of his own, but he does sometimes let his own attitudes show through. For instance, he is sceptical about the ideas of some 'green localists' that a decentralised economy would naturally lead to ecological sustainability and social justice. The chapter on 'Marxisms' (note the plural) starts well, with a photo of the Socialist Party's founding conference, but ends weakly with references to Russia, Cuba, etc., as if these dictatorships constituted a valid reason for rejecting Marx's ideas. He discerns a 'pro-globalisation strand of Marx's thought', which is correct to the extent that Marx saw capitalism as expanding into more and more parts of the world, but it is simplistic to transfer what he wrote in this regard 150 years ago to the present day. Capitalism has long been a world system and created the potential for abundance, so there is no need for further globalisation and the concomitant wars and impoverishment.

As a Green Party member, Wall himself seems to support what he calls 'ecosocialism'. Certainly we can accept that Socialism needs to include ecological concerns, indeed that this will be a crucial aspect of a society based on common ownership. We can also agree with his description of the ideas of Joel Kovel: "The use of what is useful and beautiful must be pursued, while exchange values must be rejected. . . . The rejection of exchange values is essential to reducing resource consumption and human alienation." Unfortunately Wall stops short of advocating the abolition of the wages system, and it's just not clear what sort of society he does stand for. There are some remarks about "moving beyond the market" and "extending the commons",

capitalism'). But not many readers will be familiar with all the writers and activists mentioned here, so the book does serve a useful purpose, though it is scarcely a full guide to the ideas of particular thinkers.

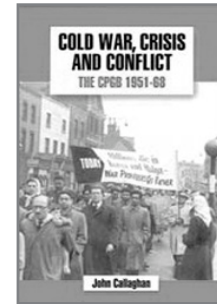
On the whole Wall summarises other views rather

and some praise for the open source software movement, where software is put on the web for free (Wall suggests that Marx would have used the open source browser Firefox!). This is OK as far as it goes, but it needs to be taken that crucial bit further.

PB

Tankies, Mate...

John Callaghan, Cold War, Crisis and Conflict, Lawrence & Wishart, £15.99
Geoff Andrews, Endgames and New Times, Lawrence & Wishart, £15.99



Lawrence & Wishart's 'official' history of the CPGB is completed by these two volumes which, somewhat overlapping, cover the years from 1951 to the party's oh so sad demise in 1991. Taken together this pair resemble the first two dry-as-dust

academic tomes by James Klugmann published in the mid-60s rather than the more readable but scanty volumes of Noreen Branson. The similarity between them ends there however. Callaghan's task of covering the middle years of the 50s and 60s was more difficult given the rather arbitrary starting and ending points (1951 and 1968) and, despite the excitements promised in the title, the era was a largely static one so far as the CPGB was concerned. Callaghan however rises to the challenge and his book is an excellent survey of the organisation during the era.

The same cannot be said of the other offering. Whereas Callaghan is dispassionate in his treatment of the CPGB, Andrews' book reads like a polemic rather than a serious history. His supposition that the downfall of the CPGB was due to the decline of the industrial working class sounds like a Holocaust denier's rantings: "They just vanished mate". (On the other hand this is slightly more plausible than one version which points a finger at the CIA) And with his constant waving of "the Soviet Mantra" and even a snide mention of "tankies", it is obvious which side he was on in the Civil War in the party. Not that we could give a monkey's for either side. Both were downright reformists. And just how low down this supposedly revolutionary organisation was can be judged in the book. One 'demand' was for the reduction of National Service from two years to one. Not even the SWP in its current Mad Mullah Alliance phase is that bad. So Callaghan gets ten out of ten while Andrews' book gets him a wooden spoon rapped over the knuckles - and the CPGB? A nice cosy corner in the great dustbin of history specially reserved.

KAZ



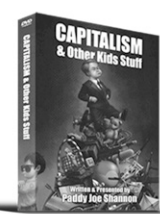
Capitalism? Kids' Stuff

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Meetings

CHISWICK

Tuesday 20 December 8pm
West London Branch Social

Canteen (first door on left), Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 (nearest tube: Turnham Green).

CLAPHAM

Saturday 10 December, 11 am to 5pm
Book Sale (Marx, Labour Movement, etc)

Socialist Party Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North).

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Fifty Years Ago

OIL - THE PRIZE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Fahoud is the name of the spot in the Arabian desert that is the centre of the drama being played out with repercussions throughout the Eastern Mediterranean lands, and Fahoud spells oil. Mr. Noel Barber, correspondent of the *Daily Mail* told the story in the issues of 31 October and 7 November.

"A year ago no white man had ever been there. Today, under the lea of a great escarpment - with the nearest natural water-hole more than 100 miles away - there lies a small cluster of huts and tents, and by the side an airstrip. It is Fahoud, a name you can find on no map. In it live a sturdy band of lonely men, Britain's advance force in the war for oil that daily gathers momentum in the Middle East... Fahoud pinpoints the struggle for oil being fought by vast concerns in Wall Street and the City, by diplomats in Geneva, and in

clashes between troops patrolling the tenuous desert boundaries. It is the battle between the Saudis and the British, between America and Britain for mastery in the world's richest oilfield." (Daily Mail, 7/11/55).



What it's all about: oil

As Noel Barber says of his report: "It is a story that might have been written 60 years ago, when 'outposts of Empire' were fashionable."

He points out that British and American interests clash. American oil companies are closely connected with the

ownership and development of the concession oil fields in Saudi Arabia, while British companies, and the British Government, are associated with the Aden Protectorate, the Sultan of Muscat and the Sheikh Abu Dhabi. After attempts to settle the dispute by arbitration had broken down, Sir Anthony Eden announced in the House of Commons on 26 October that "native troops, commanded by British officers, had reoccupied the Buraini Oasis after a skirmish with Saudi Arabian forces who marched in three years ago." (*Daily Mail*, 31/10/55).

(From article by 'H', *Socialist Standard*, December 1955)



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



Private (?) Lives



"I did a lot of things before I came into politics that I shouldn't have done"

Political nerds will have found some excitement in the Tories' leadership election, if only because of the possibility that it would repeat the mistakes of the recent past - like John Major, William Hague and Iain Duncan Smith. Spending so many years in opposition has caused the Tory membership to ask the unbearable question of whether they are any longer the natural party of government - a nightmare from which, many of them have been hoping, the new boy David Cameron will awaken them. Perhaps Cameron's rise in the Conservative Party announces that they have moved away from the Thatcherite style, as the favourite of estate agents and car salesmen. For Cameron, like Carrington, Whitelaw and Hurd before him, is a toff; he is related to the 6th Duke of Somerset, the 7th. Earl of Denbigh, the 2nd Earl of Shrewsbury and others of that ilk.

With so much blue blood in his veins it was entirely natural that he should go to Eton and then to Oxford, to Brasenose College where they expect everyone to be touched by "the tranquil consciousness of an effortless superiority" (which is not meant to include Jeffrey Archer, who was an undergraduate there). Perhaps being superior led Cameron to join the Bullingdon, a club of upper class yobs whose only reason for existence is to drink



and eat to excess in some defenceless restaurant before they smash the place up. As might be expected, Boris Johnson

was in the Bullingdon; recalling an evening of their typical revelry, he refers to his fellow members as a "proud phalanx of tailcoated twits". The idea is that after the Bullingdon had had their fun they would evade being arrested by offering to pay generously for the damage - a tactic denied to working class rowdies causing problems in their local Tandoori, who have to pay for the damage as well as being arrested, fined or even sent into custody. There is no record of how active Cameron was in the Bullingdon; in any case he obviously devoted some time to work as he emerged with a first class degree in something other than Criminal Damage, which was his passport into a job in the Conservative Research Department.

Ascent

From there he ascended the greasy pole - although this was not always smoothly. He was a "special adviser" to Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont when the financial strategy of the Major government lay in ruins and Lamont had to make his wretched announcement that British capitalism was getting out of the ERM. Then he worked at the Home Office under Michael Howard who became memorable, not as an effective Home Secretary but for his regular defeats by the judges and for the memory of his minister for prisons, Anne Widdecombe, that there was "something of the night" about him. After a spell in what he called "industry" - the TV company Carlton Communications - and after the obligatory contest in a safe Labour Seat, in 2001 Cameron was selected to fight Witney for the Tories and at the election romped home. He was then closely involved in writing the Tory manifesto for the 2005 election, which was widely blamed for their third defeat through its concentration on the many negatives of Labour rule without persuading the voters that the Tories would be noticeably different. On the now-sensitive matter of drugs that manifesto declared:

We will stop sending mixed messages on drugs by reversing Labour's reclassification of cannabis as a less serious drug, changing it from Class C back to Class B.

Well times have changed and with them Cameron's ideas; he now refuses to commit himself about re-grading cannabis and his aides say he prefers a full debate of the issue involving academics and doctors.

Privacy

Of course drugs are a delicate matter for Cameron, made even more so by his refusal to give straight answers to questions about him using them in the past. "I did a lot of things before I came into politics that I shouldn't have done" was one of his evasions. Another was "I had a normal university experience... We're allowed to have had a private life before politics in which we made mistakes and we do things that we should not and we are all humans and we err and stray". That may have convinced the more gullible among the Tory

"We're allowed to have had a private life before politics in which we made mistakes and we do things that we should not and we are all humans and we err and stray"

party but it is not good enough. Using any controlled drug is breaking the laws which Cameron and the other MPs have laid down. He may try to avoid the matter by calling it part of his "private life", which in any case happened some time ago, but this simply does not answer the question. All over the country, every day, members of the working class are arraigned in the courts for using controlled drugs, or stealing, or breaking other laws made by the likes of Cameron. They are not allowed to excuse their offences by referring to them as part of their "private life" and as an outcome of their being human and so liable to err and stray.

It is also noticeable that Cameron is capable of taking refuge in the concept of a "private life" only when it suits him. For example he makes a lot of the fact that he has a sadly disabled son, who suffers from epilepsy and cerebral palsy and who is unlikely ever to be able to walk or talk. Cameron has made references to this child in terms which his listeners have found deeply moving, so that none of them ever asked whether a

disabled child was not essentially a "private" matter not to be used to boost a politician's desired image as a caring father, a man fit to be a parent to the entire nation. Then there was the matter of Cameron's pregnant wife and of the TV publicised act of him fondly placing his hand on her anatomical bump while the audience swooned and the votes in favour of him as party leader mounted up.

Arm Twisting

It says something about the Tories' panic and how desperate they are to erase bad memories, that they should promote an MP as inexperienced (although practised in cynicism) as Cameron as the man to become prime minister in a few years' time. It may also say something about arm twisting and bullying behind closed doors, about cynical deals done in elegant Notting Hill houses and discreet restaurants. Among all this Cameron strives to persuade us that he is a new style of politician - candid, trustworthy, sincere - even if this is just like Tony Blair and his "I'm a pretty honest kinda guy". But Cameron's character and his motivation have been shown up in his campaign for the leadership, in the attempt to stifle inconvenient memories and the fashioning and selective exposure of his "private life" while asserting a right to protect it. A Cameron premiership would have nothing different to offer from all those wretched failures in the past. The most we can expect is that his wife, who is said to be a talented designer, does something to spruce up the wallpaper in Number Ten. ■

IVAN

Clarification: In the November Greasy Pole column we stated that the men who threw Walter Wolfgang out of the Labour conference were "beefy, enthusiastically respectful, Labour Party members". This was spin put on the incident at first - that the stewards were party members, so amateurs, so if they went a bit over the top it was understandable... It quickly came to light that in fact they were hired "stewards" from some "security" company (perhaps with a target for the number of people ejected?).



Voice from the Back

A Thrifty Life

"Even by Philip Green's extraordinary standards, it is a handsome pay day - the retail tycoon has awarded himself Britain's biggest bonus of £1.2 billion." (*Times*, 21 October) Mr Green denies that this big cash pay-out is likely to fund more takeover bids. "I'm saving up," he says. This is unlikely as he is not known for his frugality; in fact he spent £4 million earlier in the year on his son's bar mitzvah. He also owns a 12 seater Gulfstream G550 jet and a 200ft yacht, each worth around £20 million. The salesgirls in Top Shop and Miss Selfridge, which Mr Green owns and who help produce the £1.2 billion that he wallows in, can only dream of such frugality.



Independence?

For political reasons the US government pretend that Iraq is now a democratic and independent country, but the facts are somewhat different. "Iraqi President Jalai Talabani said he opposed military action against neighbouring Syria but lacked the power to prevent US troops using his country as a launchpad if it chose to do so. 'I categorically refuse the use of Iraqi soil to launch a military strike against Syria or any other Arab country,' Talabani told the London based Arabic daily Asharq Al-Awsat in an interview on Tuesday. "But at the end of the day my ability to confront the US military is limited and I cannot impose on them my will." (*Middle East Online*, 1 November)

Democracy?

When Michael Bloomberg won the election to be Mayor of New York in 2001 we commented that it was a strange sort of democracy that allowed a multi-millionaire to become mayor just because he spent \$60 million on his campaign. He looks set to be re-elected because of his

vast wealth. "Mr Bloomberg is expected to spend \$85 million on his campaign, about eight times as much as his rivals." (*Times*, 8 November) As they say in US politics: "he bought it fair and square".



A Grateful Nation?

The British Legion has produced a report that shows that the owning class might pay lip service to the dead and maimed of their wars but that behind the fine words is the cynical reality of running the profit system. "As the nation prepares to remember the sacrifices of millions, exhaustive research by the Legion suggests that almost half of veterans and their dependants - 3.88 million - are living on less than £10,000 a year. Almost one million have to exist on less than half that amount." (*Independent*, 11 November) Died for "your" country? Well done, wage slave, your widow and orphans can cop £96 a week to survive on. We shall also give you a poem about "lest we forget". Poems are much cheaper than pensions.

(*Independent*, 11 November) Died for

"your" country? Well done, wage slave, your widow and orphans can cop £96 a week to survive on. We shall also give you a poem about "lest we forget". Poems are much cheaper than pensions.

The Deadly Dust

An estimated 100,000 people in the UK have been diagnosed as having pleural plaques - internal scarring on the lining of the lung that indicates exposure to asbestos. "A landmark test case will

appear in the Court of Appeal tomorrow in which the insurance industry on behalf of employers will argue that a potentially fatal condition caused by exposure to asbestos should not be compensated." (*Observer*, 13 November) Earlier this year the insurers with the Department of Trade and Industry on behalf of British shipbuilders managed to slash the compensation from between £12,500 and £20,000 to £5,000 and £7,000. Whether on the battlefield or the shipyard the capitalist class will always put profits before human life.

Torturous Arguments

The US government is opposed to torture, isn't it? Well, sort of. The US Congress recently passed an amendment to ban American soldiers and spies from torturing prisoners but the White House came out against such legislation. "This week saw the sad spectacle of an American president lamely trying to explain to the citizens of Panama that, yes he would veto any such bill but, no, 'We do not torture.' Meanwhile, Mr Bush's increasingly error-prone vice-president,



Dick Cheney, has been on Capitol Hill trying to bully senators to exclude America's spies from any torture ban. To add a note of farce to the tragedy, the administration has had to explain that the CIA is not torturing prisoners in Asia and Eastern Europe - though of course it cannot confirm that such prisons exist." (*Economist*, 12 November) Everything quite clear now?

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The Lazy Man Objection

"About 73% of workers north of the border who replied to an insurance company study said they regularly failed to take all of their holidays. Workers in London fared worst, with 77% not using up their annual leave." (*BBC News*, 15 November) So what about the objection to socialism that it would not work because people are too lazy?

Free lunch

by Rigg

